

MONARCH

VOLUME FIVE | EDITION TWO | WINTER 2024

Plymouth Place Gives Back

THE CAUSES THAT INSPIRE AND KEEP THEM CONNECTED



ART COMES ALIVE WITH NEW "RESIDENCY" PROGRAM

FIRST LOOK AT THE HEALTH CARE CENTER REVAMP

HOW TO BE A PHILANTHROPIST THROUGH PLANNED GIVING



Exemplary living for generations.

Table of Contents

Board Chair and CEO Welcome.....	3
Message from the Residents' Council Vice President.....	4
A Hub for Living Fully.....	5
Giving Back: A Plymouth Place Community Effort.....	6
GROWING HOPE GLOBALLY.....	8
EXPERIENCING JOY AT GLENHAGEN FARM RETREAT.....	9
A STITCH IN TIME.....	10
A LIFE WELL LIVED.....	12
THE FIGHT FOR REDEMPTION.....	12
PURSUING PURPOSE.....	14
MORE THAN A RIDE.....	15
THE CLARKE COMMITMENT TO CARE AND CONSERVATION.....	15
Wetland Filter: How It Works.....	17
Scotland in Photos.....	18
Empowering Care Through Education.....	20
Health Care Center Reimagined.....	21
Snapshots of Philanthropy.....	22
Artist in Residence Program Launched.....	24
Philanthropy: A Legacy of Generational Impact.....	25
Message from the Senior Director of Philanthropy.....	26
Mission Statement.....	27



NICHOLAS J. LYNN
BOARD CHAIR



JAY BIERE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Board Chair and CEO Welcome

As winter's crisp air wraps around Plymouth Place, we reflect on our community's warmth and resilience. The season's quiet beauty reminds us of an old Scottish saying: "Lang may yer lum reek" (*Long may your chimney smoke*), wishing longevity and prosperity.

These wishes come to life here as we create the perfect conditions for residents to age gracefully and thrive—not just within our walls but beyond them—as many engage in acts of kindness, bridging their experiences to other nonprofits and extending helping hands far and wide.

This issue captures stories that embody the spirit of outreach, mission, and interconnection. These pages highlight heartening journeys tied to the **Glenhagen Home for Youth, Interfaith Community Partners, Growing Hope Globally**, and more. Each piece reflects Plymouth Place's mission to be both a home and a bridge, empowering individuals to give back and inspire meaningful change through shared compassion and service.

Looking ahead, 2025 promises many exciting developments that further our mission to uplift and serve. The new **Artist in Residence program** will bring vibrant creativity to our halls, enriching our shared

experience. At the same time, thoughtful renovations to the **Health Care Center** on the third floor will provide even greater care, comfort, and support. These forward strides ensure that Plymouth Place remains a beacon of hope, growth, and purpose.

Each new year brings potential, gratitude, and fresh opportunities for ministry and connection. We enter this next season encouraged by the belief that aging gracefully is not merely a destination, but a journey marked by compassion, outreach, and the enduring strength of a united, purpose-driven community.

Here's to embracing the path ahead and making every moment count.

With warmth and hope,
Nick Lynn, Board Chair, and Jay Biere, CEO



DON AHLM
RESIDENTS' COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT

Message from the Residents' Council Vice President

How does one describe Plymouth Place? Where does one begin. For me, it all begins in South Holland, a Chicago suburb, in a family home filled with cherished memories. I spent many days maintaining the house—cutting grass, gardening, and cleaning the gutters piled with fall leaves from countless maple trees. Snow removal, concerns over freezing water lines, and a flooded basement felt like chores at the time, but family pizza outings always brought us joy and togetherness.

The hardest part of transitioning to Plymouth Place was leaving behind a home steeped in memories.

My journey began after a fall that broke my lower leg and ankle, leading me to skilled nursing for seven weeks of rehabilitation. Thanks to the dedicated professionals, I progressed from a wheelchair to walking independently. After losing the belly band, it was time to make another decision—now what?

With support, I transitioned to assisted living to continue my recovery during the height of

the COVID-19 pandemic. Though challenging, I now appreciate how effectively the team at Plymouth Place ensured residents' safety, especially with the availability of early vaccines.

When the quarantine was lifted, I finally had the chance to explore Plymouth Place fully. I wandered the Landing, discovering a gift shop, library, and the Bistro—a vibrant and welcoming hub. What a revelation! The warm smiles and encouragement from fellow residents made it clear that this was more than a place to live; it was a *community*.

Through friendly conversations with team members, I found my next chapter in an independent living apartment on the seventh floor.

One of the most remarkable experiences during my time here has been witnessing the creation of the Arboretum Villas. Being a spectator—from construction to a thriving community—is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and has been inspiring. Welcoming new neighbors and seeing how these additions benefit all residents has been a privilege.

Needless to say, I am fortunate to call Plymouth Place home. ●



(LEFT) Resident John Fry empowers his fitness journey using the HUR machine in the impressive workout room at Plymouth Place. (RIGHT) Plymouth Place's Central Park offers various engaging programs throughout the year, including yoga, frisbee golf, and singalongs by a campfire.

A HUB FOR LIVING FULLY

Plymouth Place is more than a place to live—it's a hub of health and wellness that empowers residents to live the fulfilling life they've worked so hard to achieve.

"With our new expansion, residents are more active and engaged than ever before," said **Margo Gilbert**, *Independent Living Sales Manager*. "Our lifestyle draws people to Plymouth Place and truly enriches their lives. When you feel good, you can do 'more good' for yourself and others."

From pickleball to bocci ball, Plymouth Place offers activities for everyone. Residents can start their day with a walk around our beautiful pond, pop into a water aerobics class, explore new yoga poses, spend an afternoon in the greenhouse, or lift weights in our state-of-the-art gym. And with onsite physical therapy, maintaining strength and mobility is easy—whether recovering from an injury or simply staying in top form.

Another major draw is Plymouth Place's not-for-profit status. "People want to be part of a community that gives back," **Kledia Simo**, *Sales Engagement Specialist*, explained. And giving back is at the heart of Plymouth Place. Last year, we donated over \$160,000 in time, space, funds, and support to 120 local non-profit organizations. Plymouth Place residents tutor team members through our English as a Second Language program, collect books for students, host discussions on social justice, and so much more.

At Plymouth Place, residents discover a unique balance of wellness and purpose, where every day offers a chance to connect, contribute, and thrive. "I often hear residents say they're surprised how quickly they become active and engaged after moving in," said Margo. "That's our ultimate goal because a purposeful life is the key to feeling happy and fulfilled." ●



GIVING BACK:

A Plymouth Place Community Effort

At Plymouth Place, giving back is more than an individual effort—it's a shared value embraced by residents, corporate partners, and board members. Together, they create a ripple effect of positivity that reaches far beyond our walls.

Living here empowers residents to pursue causes close to their hearts, from youth mentorship programs to global hunger relief and social services. Likewise, corporate partners and board members are vital in supporting and advancing these efforts. This collective passion for meaningful change inspires others to join in and make a difference.

"Just as our residents volunteer in the community, we engage others to help within Plymouth Place," said **Kathleen Jurek**, *Volunteer Coordinator*. "The diverse range of talents and skills shared by residents and supporters is truly inspiring!"

Volunteering and giving back enhance mental well-being, reduce isolation, and strengthen physical health while fostering purpose, confidence, and connection. These efforts build bridges across generations, forge friendships, and enrich lives.

CEO Jay Biere reflects, "Plymouth Place isn't just a place to live; it's a hub for aging gracefully and growing vibrantly. As our residents, corporate partners, and board members share their time, talents, and wisdom, they inspire us all to reach beyond our walls and transform lives in our community and beyond."

[READ ON FOR THEIR INSPIRING STORIES AND THE CAUSES THAT CONNECT US ALL.](#)



Growing Hope Globally: A Community Effort with a Global Reach

It is a beautiful early autumn Sunday in rural America. Families gather in the afternoon, following signs that lead to a recently cleaned farmer's equipment shed and floors swept.

Folding tables and chairs fill it now, and food and pies will magically appear before long. The highlight is the impressive combines and trucks in the field. After a brief worship service and a hearty meal, many enjoy a ride in a combine, marveling at its spacious cab and high-tech monitor that tracks grain yield. The harvested corn is unloaded into a truck for transport to an elevator for sale. Proceeds from this event support global sustainable food security programs, inspiring hope for a better future.

Why does this gathering matter? It symbolizes the powerful partnership between farmers and “city folk” to empower small-scale farmers worldwide. While emergency food distribution is essential in times of crisis, farmers everywhere take pride in becoming self-reliant, cultivating crops, and sustaining their communities. **Growing Hope Globally** is a nonprofit organization that supports these farmers in achieving food independence.

The initiative begins with a U.S. farmer donating a portion of their land for a growing project, often “heart string” land passed down for generations. This brings them purpose, knowing their contribution helps others improve their lives. City churches or community organizations usually fund essential supplies like seeds, fertilizer, and fuel. Committees formed by rural and urban partners coordinate the projects and determine the distribution of proceeds. Through this collaboration, “city mice” and “country mice” unite, forming lasting friendships.

Norm and **Carol Braksick** have been devoted to Growing Hope Globally for over 25 years. Norm played a vital role in founding the organization and served as its first volunteer executive director for five years. With a background

rooted in farming and experience at The Upjohn Company's Animal Health Division and The Asgrow Seed Company, Norm's expertise was ideally suited for leading Growing Hope Globally.

“We were privileged to visit farmers in Kenya who had benefited from the support provided by Growing Hope Globally. It was one of the most



NORM & CAROL BRAKSICK

rewarding experiences of our lives,” said Carol. “Each year, we donate the profit from our 'heart string farm' in Missouri, knowing that others worldwide will gain access to water, the joy of feeding their families, and perhaps even the chance to send their children —girls included—to school.”

GROWING HOPE GLOBALLY now operates in over 30 countries around the world and has impacted more than 2.3 million people. If you would like to learn more about the organization, visit [GrowingHopeGlobally.org](https://www.growinghopeglobally.org).



Experiencing Joy at Glenhagen Farm Retreat

Picture the exhilaration of a hot summer day, the refreshing touch of Big Bureau Creek's cool water at **Glenhagen Farm Retreat**. With a net in hand, you're captivated as a school of tadpoles swiftly darts past your feet. Bullfrogs echo, a delicate dragonfly perches on the tall green river grass, and a red-tailed hawk gracefully glides overhead. These are the unique experiences that await you at Glenhagen Farm Retreat.

Glenhagen Farm Retreat is a 501(c)(3) charity that provides tent camping and nature experiences on 63 acres of prairie, woods, and stream near Princeton, Illinois. Most campers have never slept in a tent, seen the stars at night, or heard an owl hooting. The camp offers a safe, peaceful environment, a welcome contrast to the urban environment where most campers reside.

Favorite activities include exploring the creek, hiking woodland and meadow trails, cooking s'mores around the fire pit, sand volleyball, and learning about the wonders of God's creation. The camp provides a pavilion with a kitchen, showers, washrooms, a gas grill, tents, games, and an educational curriculum. Comments from campers include: “Glenhagen has moved me spiritually and emotionally. You welcomed us students with open arms. Thank you for letting us be a part of your family!” and “Overall, it was an amazing adventure.”

Plymouth Place corporate partners **Andy Tecson** and his wife **Nancy Hagen** enthusiastically founded the camp. Nancy describes her late father, **Glen Hagen**, who the camp is named after: “My dad was a person who believed the that world's resources should be shared with everyone, and the camp reflects his values.”

Visiting groups have included Cristo Rey Jesuit High School—which annually conducts a Care for Creation retreat; Bridge Communities—which



Cristo Rey Jesuit High School students and Nancy Hagen explore Glenhagen farm retreat.

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provides transitional housing for single mothers; Kids Above All—a social service agency serving youth; Building Leaders Advocating Change—which provides STEM education and mentoring in DeKalb; Harmony Community Church from Chicago; and the Green Team from Gary Comer Youth Center—made up of teens who grow 20,000 pounds of fresh vegetables and contribute them to the community on the South Side of Chicago.

To learn more about ways to get involved, go to glenhagenfarm.org.



CATHY BLANFORD

A Stitch in Time: Journeying Through Loss and Legacy

Thirty-nine years ago, **Cathy Blanford's** life was forever altered when her beloved husband, **Bill Blanford**, was diagnosed as HIV-positive. Bill had already endured significant health challenges, having survived a liver transplant, only to face a new battle with a disease that was, at the time, highly stigmatized and poorly understood. Bill died from AIDS-related complications seven years later.

During challenging times, Cathy focused on supporting families affected by HIV/AIDS, especially children and their parents. She became involved with the **National AIDS Memorial Quilt**, started in 1985 to honor those lost to the epidemic and to help grieving families commemorate their loved ones. By 1988, the quilt had toured 20 cities and raised \$500,000 for AIDS service organizations.

To honor Bill's memory, Cathy, her daughters, and a group of friends created a quilt panel representing his life through five sections: family, professional life, health challenges, church devotion, and hobbies. Bill's panel joined the monumental AIDS Memorial Quilt in 1994.

THE AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT: A GLOBAL STATEMENT OF LOSS

What started as a grassroots initiative to challenge the stigma surrounding AIDS has transformed into one of the largest public art projects worldwide. The AIDS Memorial Quilt now features over 50,000 panels, each about 3 feet by



6 feet, representing human graves and honoring more than 110,000 lives lost to AIDS-related complications. Weighing 54 tons, it serves as both a personal memorial and a global reminder of the virus's impact.

In October 1996, the entire quilt was displayed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors, including Cathy and her daughters. The quilt created a vibrant scene stretching from the Washington Monument to the Capitol, showcasing heartfelt stories of loss and love, such as Bill's.

THE QUILT COMES HOME

The significance of the quilt is not confined to one moment or place. Recently, a section of the quilt, including Bill's panel, was brought to Chicago, where it was displayed in Grant Park. "The quilt is a powerful tool that raises awareness about the impact of the ongoing epidemic," Cathy says. "At the same time, it is a very personal memorial for those whose loved one's lives are depicted."

Despite progress from medical advancements like antiretroviral therapy, the HIV epidemic is not over. Currently, over 38 million people live with HIV, and about 1.5 million are newly infected each year. Most recently, President Joe Biden displayed the AIDS Memorial quilt on the White House South Lawn in observance of World AIDS Day on December 1, 2024.

The AIDS Memorial Quilt remains a vital tool for advocacy and remembrance, regularly updated with new panels to honor those lost and raise awareness of the continuing fight against HIV/AIDS.

For Cathy, every visit to her husband's quilt panel stirs deep emotions. "I'm always moved to tears," she shares, remembering the remarkable man Bill was. Cathy supports the National AIDS Memorial both financially and by sharing Bill's story, ensuring the quilt remains accessible to convey its profound message of love, loss, and resilience.

Cathy's story and Bill's quilt are one thread in a vast tapestry of lives lost and remembered. Each stitch in the AIDS Memorial Quilt tells a story—some well-known, others quiet and personal—but all of them matter, serving as a testament to the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS and the enduring human capacity for love and remembrance.



Washington, DC, USA. 11th Oct, 1996. Aerial view of the entire NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt displayed on the National Mall October 11, 1996 in Washington, DC. The full quilt, which stretches nearly a mile from the Washington Monument to the US Capitol.

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A Life Well Lived, Paid Forward

Diane Fitzpatrick and her husband, **Ed**, became part of the Plymouth Place community in 2017. Together, they embraced the vibrancy of their new home, forming meaningful friendships and immersing themselves in the spirit of community. After Ed's passing in 2020, Diane remained deeply engaged, dedicating herself to volunteering—most notably as a mentor in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program for frontline team members.



DIANE FITZPATRICK (1940-2024)

According to her daughter, Beth Waldo, Diane found great fulfillment in her role as a mentor. “My mother really loved mentoring,” Beth said. “For her, education was the key. She always brought a small treat for the team member she mentored each week, and loved knowing she was making such a difference in his life.”

Diane's generosity extended beyond her lifetime as a **Plymouth Rock Planned Giving Society** member by remembering Plymouth Place in her estate plan. Her commitment to helping others inspired her to leave a lasting legacy. *Senior Director of Philanthropy Paddy Homan* explained, “When we learned there could be ESL funding challenges in 2025, Diane's family graciously agreed to honor her wishes by designating her parking entrance refund toward sustaining the program.”

Diane's life is a testament to the power of paying it forward, leaving a legacy of education, kindness, and service that will continue to ripple through the Plymouth Place community for years to come.

The Fight for Redemption

Bill Ryan has spent over 25 years fighting for justice in Illinois's prison system. He successfully campaigned to abolish the death penalty in Illinois and is now advocating for the reintroduction of parole, particularly for elderly prisoners who have shown significant rehabilitation after serving decades behind bars.

In Illinois, the prison system has long operated without a general parole system for adults, a policy eliminated in 1978 when “truth in sentencing” laws were implemented. “These laws mean that many prisoners, especially those sentenced to life or long terms, have no opportunity for review or release, even after demonstrating genuine transformation,” explains Bill.

“This lack of parole particularly impacts elderly prisoners, whose likelihood of reoffending drops to nearly zero as they age.”

The U.S. prison population aged 55 and older has increased fivefold in 30 years (*NPR, March 2024*), with 22% of Illinois prisoners now over 50 (*Vera Institute*). Incarcerating elderly inmates' costs around \$70,000 per person annually due to heightened medical needs (*Interrogating Justice*). Parole for rehabilitated elderly prisoners could save millions and recognize their potential for change.

Through the Illinois **Elder Parole Coalition**, Bill Ryan advocates for elder parole, allowing prisoners over 55 who have served 25 years to be considered for release. While not guaranteeing freedom, it lets parole boards assess rehabilitation and societal risk.

Despite evidence that recidivism drops to 2-3% for those over 50 (*U.S. Department of Justice*), Illinois remains one of the few states without a general parole system for adults, leaving many, like William Peeples, sentenced to die in prison despite their rehabilitation.

LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS BY WILLIAM PEEPLES

Bill Ryan has profoundly impacted one life, specifically, William Peeples, Jr., a death row survivor that he met over three decades ago. “William is an example, not an exception,” Bill says. William's story is a remarkable transformation, made possible through a relationship with Bill that defied all expectations.

“Bill Ryan and I are an unlikely pair, but for divine intervention, I can't imagine us meeting,” asserts William. “He's a white, Catholic, middle-class Southerner, and I'm a Black, Muslim, death row survivor. Yet, we've each managed to impact and influence one another's lives powerfully.”

William continues, “Bill has seen me at my worst, helped me come to grips with my crime, and self-rehabilitate in an environment that does not make change easy or popular.”

Through this journey, Bill and William's bond became more than emotion — it grew into a source of spiritual support. “By God's love, we've loved one another and served as a means of spiritual healing and positive affirmation of the teachings of both Christ and Muhammad (PBUH)*,” affirms William.

William says, “Bill loves me with the love of Christ, an authentic love that, in time, led me to take full ownership of my crime and then work arduously towards self-reform and self-actualization. I now live in a way that honors



BILL RYAN



Bill Ryan, center, with his partner, Cathy Blanford, and William Peeples

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* PBUH stands for “Peace Be Upon Him.” It is commonly used as a sign of respect by English-speaking Muslims after mentioning the name of any of the Holy Prophets from Adam PBUH through Jesus Son of Mary PBUH.



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...by modeling transformative justice and mutual healing for those who've been harmed by violence, as well as those who've caused that harm."

Bill Ryan continues to advocate for social justice, believing deeply in the possibility of redemption and rehabilitation. Bill remarks, "Humans can change, and our justice system must recognize that possibility, especially for those who have paid their debt and seek to live out their remaining years in peace."

Pursuing Purpose

Bob Denny recalls with gratitude how early retirement allowed him to embrace a new chapter, pursuing interests and giving back to his community. "I was fortunate to retire early and follow my passions — photography, education, and volunteering for people facing challenges in life," he says.

Bob's pursuits were not just varied but deeply fulfilling. He hosted destination photography workshops, taught classes at a Michigan botanical garden, and volunteered as an income tax preparer and financial coach in inner-city Chicago. Along the way, he enjoyed woodworking, crafting a dulcimer, and even learning to play it. "Life was good," he reflects, "but life moves on."

While continuing rewarding outside activities, Bob's home in La Grange began demanding more time and attention. "I had too many balls in the air and not enough time to truly enjoy any of them."

When the Arboretum Villas expansion project at Plymouth Place opened in winter 2023, Bob seized the chance to reorder his priorities. "The move has been positive for many reasons," he shares, "especially because it freed up time and energy for what I enjoy and makes me feel relevant."

Relieved of home repairs, yard work, and worries about a power outage stranding his sump pump, Bob could focus on more meaningful pursuits. Today, he serves as a **SHIP Medicare Counselor** and prepares income taxes for seniors. He also enjoys the wood shop and the greenhouse at Plymouth Place, learning new skills from resident mentors and serving on the **Horticulture Committee**.

"My lifestyle and interests will continue to evolve," Bob says, "and I'm grateful to live at Plymouth Place, where I can focus on what's truly important."



BOB DENNY

More Than A Ride

At Plymouth Place, residents like **Doris** and **Dave Bryant** embody a commitment to community service that extends far beyond their retirement years. "One of the things I appreciate most about living here is my fellow residents," Doris shares. "They are warm, welcoming, and endlessly dedicated to learning and giving—both within Plymouth Place and in the wider community."

Doris and her husband, Dave, have dedicated much of their lives to helping others. Together, they were early supporters of the **Saturday Meals Program** at the First Congregational Church of La Grange. "When we started, we served about eight to ten homeless individuals each week," Doris recalls. "Today, that number has grown to over 70 meals every Saturday, helping those who struggle to access a nutritious meal." She is incredibly proud that Plymouth Place partners with the program, providing hot meals.

In addition, Doris serves on the Board of Directors for **Community Assisted Rides (CARS)**, formerly known as **Interfaith Community Partners**. CARS offers accompanied rides for seniors needing transportation to essential appointments. Doris herself drives clients regularly. "We're there to support them through their appointments," she says. "It's rewarding to be a friendly face when they come out, knowing they don't have to wait alone for a ride."

The Bryants' spirit of giving is mirrored by many Plymouth Place residents who volunteer quietly and generously. "There are so many here who do so much for the community, often without fanfare," Doris says. "I'm just grateful to be part of a community that values service as much as I do."



DORIS BRYANT

The Clarke Commitment to Care and Conservation

The bond between Plymouth Place board member **J. Lyell Clarke** and Plymouth Place is both professional and deeply personal. His mother, former resident Mary Kemp Clarke, cherished the pond area at Plymouth Place, often enjoying peaceful walks there. As a heartfelt tribute to her, Lyell joined the Plymouth Place board on behalf of the Clarke family business (Clarke), a decision that went beyond fulfilling a role — it was a way to honor her legacy. As both Plymouth Place and Clarke share the goal of uplifting and serving people and prioritizing sustainability, their missions align naturally, paving the way for meaningful collaborations.



Clarke Cares team working alongside Carter Center staff distributing mosquito bed nets in Plateau, Nigeria.

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Clarke is a third-generation, family-owned business specializing in the development of sustainable public health mosquito control solutions. Like Plymouth Place, it is deeply committed to fostering community well-being and advancing employee development. Clarke's mission is built on making communities around the world more livable, safe, and comfortable by reducing mosquito-borne illnesses and promoting global health and environmental care. In pursuit of this purpose-driven work, Clarke is guided by its core values of caring for and protecting company coworkers, customers, communities, and the planet.



J. LYELL CLARKE

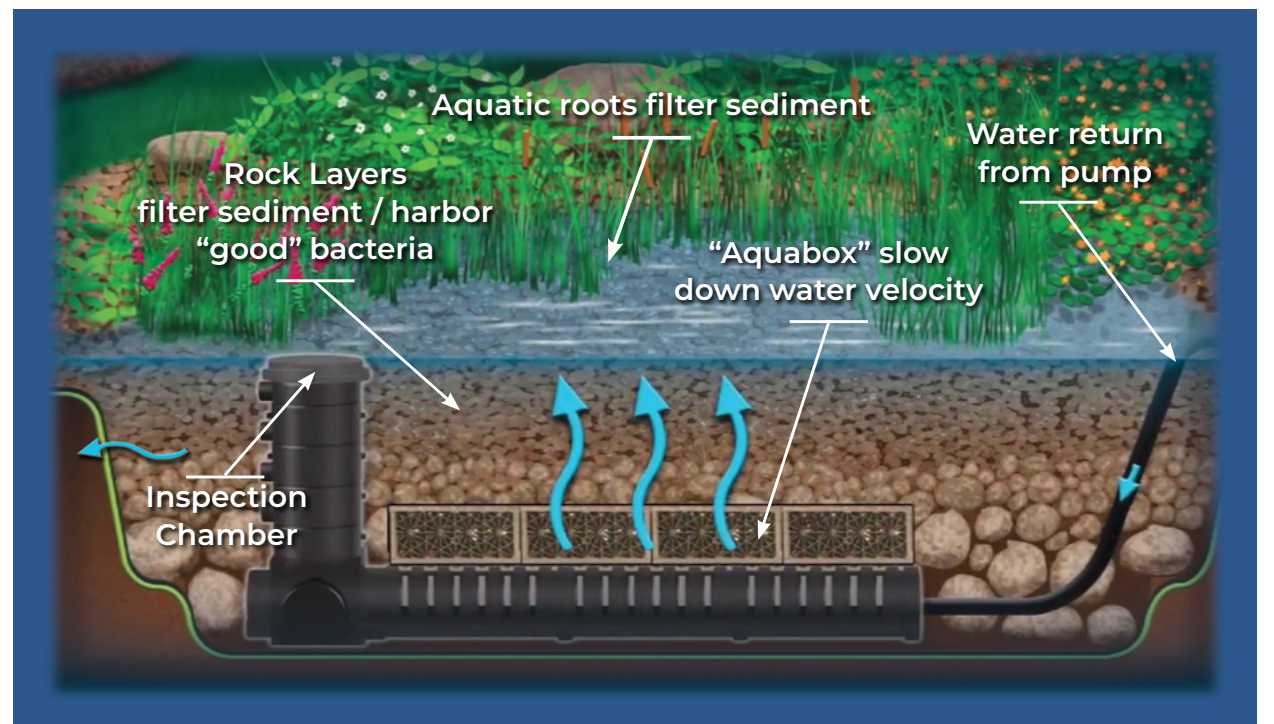
These values align with Plymouth Place's commitment to resident safety and sustainability. "In joining the Plymouth Place board, Lyell Clarke brings his expertise in balancing business innovation with environmental responsibility and brings a systems-focused perspective to our board," says *Plymouth Place chairman, Nick Lynn.*

Clarke's holistic commitment to environmental stewardship and social responsibility is consistently demonstrated in several ongoing ways, such as through its native prairie restorations to improve biodiversity on company properties, its annual **Give to Tomorrow**® grant program used to fund environmental non-profit causes, and its annual **Day of Caring** event, during which all Clarke coworkers spend the day volunteering on environmental improvement projects in the communities where they live and work.

Another example is Clarke's organizational foundation, a 501c3 non-profit entity that Clarke coworkers manage, called the **Clarke Cares Foundation**. Since its founding in 2008, the Foundation has raised enough money to purchase over 275,000 bed nets. These nets are distributed to families in Nigeria under a formal partnership with former President Jimmy Carter's The Carter Center and have helped protect more than 650,000 people from mosquito-borne diseases like malaria and lymphatic filariasis.

"It has been the greatest honor of my life to guide our family business towards a state of flourishing, where business prospers, coworkers thrive, and nature flourishes, says **J. Lyell Clarke, Chairman of Clarke and Plymouth Place board member.** "It's a privilege to be asked to bring this experience to Plymouth Place, especially given the special connection for our family."

"Plymouth Place and Lyell are excited to work together to help people and protect the planet for a healthier future." says **Nick Lynn,** underlining Clarke's valuable experience in innovative, sustainable business. ●



WETLAND FILTER

How It Works

At Plymouth Place, our pond is more than just a stormwater management system—it's a thriving ecosystem and beautiful amenity for our community. We use innovative technology to ensure the pond remains a healthy environment for aquatic life, maintaining clear water while minimizing algae

growth. Behind the scenes, a carefully engineered wetland filter works 24/7, removing excess sediment and nutrients, supporting many aquatic plants, and promoting beneficial bacteria. This system recirculates over 1.3 million gallons of water daily, creating the perfect balance for fish, plants, and a vibrant pond. ●



Plymouth Place travelers as the sun went down over Rosslyn Chapel.

SCOTLAND IN PHOTOS

In September, the **Plymouth Place Travel Club** embarked on an enchanting 8-day journey to “Bonnie Wee Scotland,” exploring historic Edinburgh, the charming Highland town of Pitlochry, and culminating at the picturesque Loch Lomond. The trip featured thoughtfully curated day excursions, visits to seven stunning castles with a specially chosen driver, and indulgent tastings of Scotland’s rich culinary delights at first-class hotels and restaurants. The world-class concerts significantly enriched each destination visited. Traveling as a Plymouth Place group created an unforgettable experience that fostered lasting friendships among travelers.



CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP

A mother and son welcome the Plymouth Place Travel group to Atholl Palace in Pitlochry with bagpipes — a cherished family tradition!

The intricate exterior of Rosslyn Chapel, featured in the modern era as a key location in the film “The Da Vinci Code.”

Mike Naughton and Doris Bryant on beautiful Loch Lomond!



CLOCKWISE FROM THE LEFT

Plymouth Place CEO and tour guide Jay Biere gets acquainted with some local sheep.

A sunny afternoon at the legendary St. Andrews Links, the birthplace of golf.

World traveler, Elaine Cue, takes in the breathtaking scenery of the Scottish countryside.





On November 21, 2024, the Plymouth Place Certified Nursing Academy celebrated the graduation of four team members who advanced their nursing careers through scholarship support, inspiring others in their journey.

EMPOWERING CARE THROUGH EDUCATION

The newly established **Plymouth Place CNA Academy**, launched in December 2023 through the **Elvira Teuffer Scholarship Fund**, has successfully graduated 23 Certified Nursing Assistants in its inaugural year. *Plymouth Place CEO Jay Biere* expressed his pride: "Watching our graduates grow professionally and personally is a true privilege. Their dedication is a testament to the strength of our community."

Graduates have proclaimed how the program has opened new doors for their families and careers. **Dr. Rebecca Lake**, *Plymouth Place board member and commencement address speaker*, highlighted,

"Each class inspires me with its diversity and determination. While times change, the passion for caregiving remains a constant."

Biere added, "We are grateful to the **Pepper Family Foundation** for a two-year grant supporting CNA and nursing scholarships, making a real difference for our frontline team members."

Frank Appleby, *CEO of the Pepper Family Foundation*, shared, "We're proud to support a program that uplifts individuals and strengthens the foundation of compassionate care. The CNA Academy reflects our belief in the power of education to transform lives." ●

To learn more about how to partner with our scholarship program, visit plymouthplacegiving.org or contact **The Office of Philanthropy** at (708) 557-6678.



HEALTH CARE CENTER REIMAGINED

Plymouth Place is excited to announce the renovation of our Health Care Center on the 3rd floor, designed to enhance both comfort and care for residents. These updates will modernize the space, improve functionality, and provide a warm, welcoming environment that reflects our commitment to exceptional service.

Katie Freese, *Senior Director of Support Services*, said, "At Plymouth Place, we strive to create a warm and welcoming home for residents while providing top-notch care. We're excited about our upcoming renovations! They'll not only refresh our look, but the updates will also make the environment more comfortable and functional. Our goal is to ensure that

everyone feels supported and at ease throughout their journey with us."

Heintje Miranda, *Health Care Administrator*, added, "The remodel is thoughtfully designed to improve the experience for everyone—residents, their families, and our dedicated team members. It's about creating a home-like environment that fosters healing, dignity, and wellbeing." ●

More information about our renovation and a timeline will be shared with residents and families in the near future.

SNAPSHOTS *of* PHILANTHROPY

Raising Monarchs!

Rev. Doreen Sterba DeZur and resident Janet Guelfi are excited to share the beautiful monarch butterflies raised from caterpillars in the assisted living neighborhood at Plymouth Place. Then, they joyfully released them into the gardens, celebrating the beauty of nature.



Donor-funded Pilates Reformer

Andrea Seymour stretches on the donor-funded Pilates Reformer at Plymouth Place with guidance and support from WELLNESS COORDINATOR, Julie Albrecht and WELLNESS MANAGER, Stefanie D'Anna. They embody the spirit of community support and personal growth.



Office of Philanthropy Corporate Partner Celebration

(LEFT) CARE CONNECT NURSE, Shunte Walton, and BOARD MEMBER, Dr. Rebecca Lake, had a delightful conversation at the annual Office of Philanthropy Corporate Partner celebration. The event took place at the top of Willis Tower, providing a stunning backdrop for a memorable experience! (RIGHT) Art Grundke, RESIDENTS' COUNCIL PRESIDENT, welcomed guests high above the clouds as the festivities reached new heights.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM LAUNCHED

Plymouth Place is proud to announce the launch of its **Artist in Residence** program, a groundbreaking initiative celebrating the arts while fostering meaningful connections within the community. The program underscores Plymouth Place's commitment to lifelong learning, creativity, and inclusion by empowering artists to immerse themselves in their work and collaborate with others.



Artist in Residence, Diarmaid O'Meachair, thrilled residents and guests with his incredible accordion playing and captivating storytelling.

"This program offers guest artists the unique chance to create and perform in an environment that is both supportive and inspiring, free from the usual constraints and demands of their daily routines," said **Jay Biere**, CEO. "Residents and their families have expressed how much they deeply appreciate the arts, and we're excited to extend this passion."

The Artist in Residence program, launched

in the fall of 2024, provides selected artists with dedicated time, space, and financial support to focus on their craft. Artists stay at Plymouth Place for a designated period, giving them the solitude to develop their work while engaging in performances and collaborations with residents and community partners.

"This initiative strengthens relationships and creates a sense of belonging for all involved," noted **Cheri Boublis**, Senior Director of Hospitality. "The experience of seeing artists grow in their craft embodies our commitment to lifelong learning."

Diarmaid O'Meachair, an award-winning accordionist from County Cork, Ireland, was the program's first artist. During his November stay, he captivated audiences and shared his expertise.

"It's been great to come, play my music, and have fresh conversations," said Diarmaid. "It has been an absolute privilege. It's been great to talk to different people who have so much experience."

The Artist in Residence program is made possible by the **Plymouth Place Community Arts Fund** and the many generous contributions of donors. Their support reimagines artist residencies, creating a meaningful impact on the arts and fostering a more inclusive artistic environment.

"The greater southwest suburbs benefit so much from initiatives like this," said **Paddy Homan**, Senior Director of Philanthropy. "Investing in the arts enriches lives, enhances well-being, and helps reinforce our role as a trusted community partner."

"Creating unforgettable experiences is at the heart of what we do," added **Jay Biere**. "And what better way to achieve that than through the power of the arts." ●

Diarmaid O' Meachair can be heard on the Plymouth Place podcast at plymouthplace.podbean.com. To learn more about the program, visit PlymouthPlace.org.



Through philanthropy and giving back, Johnne Syverson inspires lasting change, shaping a future where generations thrive.

PHILANTHROPY A Legacy of Generational Impact

With over 40 years of experience, financial planner **Johnne Syverson** helps align wealth with personal values to help benefit families, communities, and causes. This fall, he spoke at Plymouth Place's financial seminar, and soon they will partner with the National Gift Annuity Foundation, where he plays a key role.

Syverson believes everyone is a philanthropist, whether voluntarily through planned giving or involuntarily through taxes. He advocates aligning tax dollars with personal values to benefit heirs, preferred nonprofits, and society. In semi-retirement, he consults with donors and nonprofits, illustrating how planned giving can create income, preserve family harmony, and pass down assets and values.

The **1969 Tax Reform Act**, which introduced tools for planned giving, became central to his work. These instruments allow donors to support non-profits while enjoying financial and tax benefits — ensuring a lasting impact beyond annual gifts.

"Half of family wealth is typically lost by the

second generation, and only 10% remains by the third," Syverson notes. His solution: combining financial strategies with intentional value-sharing to ensure a lasting legacy.

Impressed by Plymouth Place's community-driven culture, Syverson likens it to effective financial planning — transparent, values-focused, and impactful across generations. "Planned gifts can create a legacy that thrives long after we're gone, sustaining nonprofits and easing burdens on government resources," he says.

Syverson often uses the metaphor of a monarch butterfly, symbolizing a multi-generational journey of thriving and giving. "Passing on values with valuables transforms philanthropy from obligation to opportunity, allowing us to bless others as we've been blessed," he shares.

For those considering planned giving, consult a licensed financial professional—such as a CPA, CFP, RIA, or estate attorney—for guidance on leveraging tax advantages and creating a meaningful legacy that benefits your family and community. ●



PADDY HOMAN
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY

Message from the Senior Director of Philanthropy

As we present this latest issue of **MONARCH**, we are reminded of a question often in discussions with potential donors, residents, and their families: What's the unique value proposition of choosing Plymouth Place? For each person, the answer is indeed unique, yet time and again, the benefits extend beyond just an exceptional place to live. Here, new residents find meaning and purpose, friendships and connections, and opportunities to volunteer and give back in ways that enrich their lives—and, as you'll see in this edition, bring tremendous joy.

But this notion of "value" isn't limited to those who live within our walls. Investing in Plymouth Place is equally compelling for donors, offering a measurable impact and personal rewards that echo across our community. Through options like the life income opportunities made possible by our partnership with the **National Gift Annuity Foundation**, we're helping donors experience the

dual benefit of supporting our mission and receiving financial advantages, such as tax benefits and enhanced security for their heirs.

This year, Plymouth Place celebrated many incredible milestones including 23 CNA graduates, 40 scholarships awarded, the Villas reaching 100% occupancy ahead of schedule, and our 80th anniversary. Partnerships like the Pepper Family Foundation's show confidence in our mission and inspire us to serve even more.

I invite you to consider the value of giving back to Plymouth Place in a way that supports our long-term vision, team members, and every resident we serve. Your thoughtful contributions can make a significant difference in our community and leave a lasting legacy for you and your family. It's philanthropy as a two-way street — investing in Plymouth Place's future while securing your own. ●



MISSION STATEMENT

At Plymouth Place, a nonprofit life plan community, our mission is to create a welcoming and inclusive environment that inspires individuals to grow, connect, and live their best lives. We empower our residents, team members, and partners to cultivate independence, wellness, and spirituality, while fostering meaningful relationships and a deep sense of belonging.



WAYS TO GIVE

You can support Plymouth Place in many ways, whether through an outright unrestricted cash gift or by designating your donation to one of our numerous programs, initiatives, or funds, including:

Arts & Music ♦ Scholarships ♦ Spiritual Wellness
Benevolent Support & Emergency Needs ♦ Capital Improvements ♦ Landscaping

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO GET INVOLVED, PLEASE VISIT plymouthplacegiving.org



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