

DIALOG

Seniors-students Skype successful

Dillsburg/Schuylkill Haven, Pa.

Who says “Skyping” is just for the younger generation?

Surely not the older adults involved in a program initiated by the Schuylkill Haven Senior Community Center, one of five senior centers in Schuylkill County managed by Diakon.

“Skyping with Seniors” began in November 2012 after several center participants wanted to learn more about computers. Emily Kerschner talked about being able to Skype with her daughter, Donna Nebistinsky, a third grade teacher at South Mountain Elementary near Dillsburg, Pa.

“Connie Danatzko, another member at the Schuylkill Haven center, had taken the lead on teaching other members about technology,” says Nebistinsky. “Connie had already been using Skype, so we decided it would be a great way to develop a relationship between their group and my class of third graders.”

Skype is a free application that allows someone to make video or audio calls via a computer.

The seniors communicated with the students every two weeks or as time allowed. Nebistinsky’s class asks questions such as, “What was it like when you were in third grade?” The older adults have also provided information about the coal region, while the children rewarded the group with Christmas carols.

Nebistinsky explains that as part of her social studies curriculum, she teaches lessons on being a good citizen and how students can be helpful to others in the community. One textbook lesson mentions a senior citizen who volunteers at a center in her hometown.

“I like to give my students real-life examples of what they are learning as often as I can, so I would always share with them that my mother did this same thing. Once the adults at the center became comfortable using Skype, it was a natural fit. We think of it as a modern twist on pen pals.”

Many of the students had already used Skype and are very tech-savvy, she says. They love to learn things using computers and are willing to try anything new. When Nebistinsky realized that the adults were excited to learn something new, too, she decided to combine the groups.

“It basically came out of a mutual desire to explore and learn new things using technology.”

“We spend about 20 to 30 minutes for each session,” she says. “It is tricky sometimes to manage and coordinate our schedules, but the results are definitely worth it. We are able to project their image using our projector so that the entire class can see the adults easily. We have been able to give the adults a video tour of our classroom and introduce them to other teachers and our principal.”

Kathy Leahy, who oversees the Schuylkill centers for Diakon, says Skype is almost like communicating face-to-face and is beneficial to both students and seniors. “We are teaching seniors to use new technology that can keep them connected to both their family and friends, thereby reducing the feeling of being isolated from the world around them. In addition, this program helps seniors and students learn about each other and build a lasting connection between the generations.”

Emily Kerschner is pleased with the way the program has developed. “Skyping with my daughter’s students is really fun and interesting. I never thought I would be able to learn such new technology that all of the young people know so much about. *Please turn to Page 6.*”

Technology bridges continents, brings comfort

An ocean, thousands of miles and different time zones are no match for technology. Grace Krumanocker, a resident of The Lutheran Home at Topton, a Diakon Senior Living Community, can attest to that.

Recently, when it was time for a regularly scheduled plan-of-care meeting among her family and the Topton staff, Grace sat comfortably in a residents’ lounge with her niece, who lives in the area and has power of attorney.

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Our Mission

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service.

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries: Many Hands, guided by One Heart, transforming the lives of children, families, and older adults. With programs ranging from adoption, foster care and at-risk youth services to counseling and comprehensive senior living services, Diakon annually helps thousands of people of all faiths through compassionate service, gracious hospitality, and charitable care.

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On the Cover:

Taking part in the international care conference with resident Grace Krumanocker, foreground, were, left to right, Linda Anderson, power of attorney; the Rev. Virginia Biniek, Topton chaplain; Robert Angelo, director of rehabilitation services at Topton; Beth Bechtel, seated, director of social services; Karen Sinkovits, director of community life for the Henry Health Care Center, and Erin Ofner, dietitian.

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The President's DIALOG



Mark T. Pile, MSHA, MSW,
Diakon President/CEO

SOMETIMES, THINGS JUST SEEM TO TURN OUT RIGHT. A case in point occurred recently with Pocono Lutheran Village.

Changing demographics in that market and slower-than-anticipated demand for what we called Senior LivingPlus, a catered-living program we wanted to establish in addition to the personal care offered at Pocono, resulted in sustained and significant financial losses to Diakon.

The losses were of such magnitude that we came to the difficult decision late last year to discontinue service at Pocono Lutheran Village.

Following our public announcement of that decision and the start of our efforts to secure new living accommodations for residents, we were approached by a local group of neurologists. They

had been seeking space to develop a secure Alzheimer's-type unit, along with corollary services. Pocono Lutheran Village would fit their need perfectly—and they would continue to offer personal care, maintaining the service we were providing.

And so Pocono Tranquil Gardens was born. A win-win for the physicians, Diakon, and, most of all, the local community.

In reading the history of one part of our organization, I know that the Rev. Philip Willard, a circuit-riding pastor for the Lutheran Publication Society, came upon the Tressler family home in Loysville, Pa., back in the 1800s around the time the family was in the midst of transitioning the property from classical academy to a home for children orphaned by the Civil War.

He expressed the church's interest in purchasing the property and expanding it to serve more young people in need.

And so the Tressler Lutheran Home for Children was born, beginning a legacy of service that Diakon continues even today.

Sometimes, in the midst of change, *things just seem to turn out right.*

While we have, over the last year or so, ended a few programs and transitioned others to other community service-providers, we also have embarked on ambitious renovation and expansion projects at several of our senior living communities and sought ways to expand such core programs as adoption, foster care, and services for at-risk youths.

Things just seem to turn out right.

As I write this, Twining Village sports a beautiful new lobby, dining venue, and common spaces, along with renovated apartment-homes and the start of construction of cottage homes. Luther Crest moves forward with renovations and expansion of its personal care and health care center to include a memory-support program. And Buffalo Valley Lutheran

Village prepares for a planned June move of residents from the current nursing center to the campus' state-of-the-art, neighborhood-concept health care center.

Our Child and Family Services division is increasing the number of children and families served by adoption and foster care and investigating ways to duplicate certain programs for at-risk youths in other regions. In addition, the division's leadership is successfully operating with reduced support from the Diakon Lutheran Fund—a level of support more in keeping with sustainable use of the fund's interest and principal.

Sometimes, in the midst of challenge, *things just seem to turn out right.*

At times, things turn out right because of seeming happenstance. At other times, as with our renovations and expansion, the outcome arises from careful planning and strategic execution. And sometimes, I believe, things turn out right because they dovetail with the path God intends for us. For Diakon, even as that path seems to change course, it always incorporates and prioritizes service to the neighbor. **Please turn to Page 6.**

Meals on wheels volunteer delivers food, friendship

Hegins, Pa.

EVERY MONDAY FOR THE LAST 17 YEARS, Pauline Williamson has brought two things to her neighbors in Valley View, Pa.—food and friendship.

“I have come to realize that the people I deliver food to actually look forward to my visit, that I have become a friend to them,” says Williamson, 93 herself and a long-time volunteer for the Meals on Wheels program Diakon administers in Schuylkill County.

“Some of them stand at their window looking for me to arrive,” she continues. “Their dogs know me and don’t even bark when I approach the house. I guess I have become part of the family. I sometimes spend more than an hour with each of them.”

Williamson’s active lifestyle is nothing new to her. Diakon’s oldest Meals on Wheels volunteer, she used to ride motorcycles with her late husband but, at age 62, had a bad accident in which she broke many bones.

“I gave up the motorcycle and the skis,” she says, “but I still cut my own lawn and maintain my home. I hate to cook, though. The meals on wheels food looks delicious. I can see why these folks can’t wait for me to show up at their door.”

For her birthday in December, Williamson was honored with a surprise party hosted by Diakon and other meals on wheels volunteers at Friedens Lutheran Church in Hegins.

“I was so surprised at my party. I had no idea why I was told to come early to get the meals that day. That had never happened before,” she says. She was greeted at the door by cheers. Enjoying cupcakes and coffee, she spent the time sharing stories with the group that had come to celebrate.

“I enjoy volunteering and I have made some very nice friends along the way. I hope to volunteer another seven years and then plan to retire when I turn 100. I think I get as much out of volunteering as do the people I deliver meals to each week.”

*“I gave up the
motorcycle
and the skis.”*

Diakon’s Meals on Wheels program is designed to provide hot and nutritious noon-time meals to homebound older adults throughout Schuylkill County, allowing them to remain independent in their own homes. The program provides short-term assistance for someone recuperating from surgery or an illness, or can provide longer-term service when needed. Each weekday, dedicated volunteers deliver meals to nearly 300 county residents. The program is contracted through the Schuylkill County Office of Senior Services.

“Volunteering keeps older adults active and gives them a purpose for getting out of the house,” says Michelle Klusman, assistant director for Diakon Community Services for Seniors. “It offers an opportunity to socialize with others. It brightens their day as well as the days of those they are serving.”

For more information, see
www.diakon.org/community-services-for-seniors

Pauline Williamson

What's the secret to living to 100



Jane Jones, Age 103

Allentown, Pa.

SEVEN FEMALE CENTENARIANS living at Luther Crest, a Diakon senior living community in Allentown, Pa. reinforce much of what studies have shown—that more than half of all centenarians have close relatives who also lived to a very old age, while others have been rewarded with a long life by remaining active and maintaining close relationships.

Ruth Yeo, who is 101, had close ties to her sisters growing up. They all loved music and played a variety of instruments. When they headed to college, they didn't go their separate ways. "We all went to college for music so that we could play together," says Yeo.

Like Yeo, Jane Jones and Dorothy Mann share a love of music. Jones, who had two siblings who lived to 99, says her family "was always singing. We had a choir of our own," referencing her 12 siblings. Mann adds that she did a lot of dancing on Saturday nights with her husband.

Keeping busy and involved is another significant contribution to successful aging. Jeanette Corbett, 101, credits her ability to remain active as key to her endurance. Her involvement in charity work allowed her to meet John Kennedy, Jr., Fidel Castro and Helen Keller.

Alice Klingensmith, who is 103, agrees that keeping busy has contributed to her long, fulfilling life. She added that "clean living" and owning her own business were instrumental in her ability to age gracefully.

Ethel Risely, who turned 100 on 12-12-12, claims her longevity is due in part to her strong faith (studies have cited religious belief as contributing to a longer life expectancy). "I pray a lot," she says.

However, there are some centenarians who joke that they have lived long, healthy lives despite "doing everything wrong." Eleanor Bechtel, 106, says she never exercised and enjoys wine and chocolate. "It's all natural," she says. "God made me this way."

Despite their accomplishments, the women have wishes for their remaining years. Yeo, who is losing her sight, would like to see well again. Jones would like to work again. Risely wants to be well, healthy and happy and have good relationships. Klingensmith has the simplest request of all: "I just want to be happy."



Jeanette Corbet, Age 101



Ruth Yeo, Age 101



Eleanor Bechtel, Age 106



Alice Klingensmith, Age 103



Dorothy Mann, Age 100



Ethel Risley, Age 100

Diakon Senior Living Services communities are proud to serve as home for many centenarians. Diakon Senior Living – Hagerstown/The Ravenwood Campus recognized Mary Knepper, 101, and Mary Peck, 102, at a party in December of last year. Virginia Poling, 101, not pictured, also was honored.



Mary Knepper, 101, and Mary Peck, 102



The late Edna Sheary

lived her

life in pursuit of helping others, a legacy of love that lived on through the Edna Sheary Charitable Trust Fund.

Established to benefit religious, charitable, educational, scientific, and literary causes aiding the young and old, the trust was created by Mrs. Sheary before she passed away in 1991 at the age of 87. Organizations such as Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, Evangelical Community Hospital in Lewisburg, SUN Industries, and Susquehanna University were awarded financial support by the trust, which is soon drawing to a close.

“Edna was independent, caring and always reaching out to others. That was her life, you might say,” says Shirley Wittes, Sheary’s friend, secretary of the trust fund and a member of its distribution committee. “She and her husband [Lake T. Sheary]—when he was alive—both gave to charitable organizations. Instituting a trust fund made sense to her.”

As a school teacher in the early 1920s, Sheary changed her career path and stepped out into a “man’s world,” becoming one of the first females to succeed in the banking profession. Serving as a cashier, she was promoted to assistant trust officer and finally to first vice president and trust officer, before retiring in 1972.

Known for teaching Sunday school and hosting church picnics at her cabin, Sheary was a long-time member of Christ Lutheran Church, Lewisburg. Her class, in fact, continued to bear her name long after she was physically able to teach.

When her health began to decline, she turned to her banking associates and lawyers at the Lewisburg branch of Mellon Bank, formerly Union National Bank, and now BNY Mellon, to establish a trust, designed to benefit organizations for up to 25 years. A distribution committee collectively reviewed applications for support and ultimately recommended financial grants to the trustee—BNY Mellon—based on Sheary’s desires. Trust duties included investing assets prudently, selecting a distribution committee with knowledge of education and charitable needs, and ensuring that recipients were qualified organizations.

“Having lived through the depression, Edna would have been overwhelmed by what her generosity has done,” says the Rev. J. Jeffery Zetto, former pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, and member of the Sheary Trust distribution committee. “There is no doubt she would be overwhelmed by how her trust has helped various causes, and Diakon was very much a part of that.”

Believing in Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village’s faith-based foundation, the late Mrs. Sheary wanted to help the campus. Since 1994, the trust has endowed Buffalo Valley with nearly \$197,000 in gifts and pledges supporting the current health-care center capital campaign, the design and construction of a bocce ball court, a television system that keeps residents connected, resident room furniture, and hallway lighting.

Lewisburg, Pa.

Construction will be completed in early summer on the health care center at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, replacing a nursing center built some 35 year ago. The new center will include five “neighborhoods,” each with its own country kitchen and living room and each housing 20 to 22 residents. In addition, a neighborhood will serve people receiving short-term rehabilitation; the design will allow clients to access therapy without having to traverse the entire building.

“The Sheary Trust has been a true blessing for Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village and numerous other charitable causes in the Susquehanna Valley,” says John Allison, major gifts and planned giving officer with Diakon. “And we extend a special thanks to the good stewards of the Sheary Trust who have followed through with Edna’s wishes and commitment to local charitable needs and causes.” In fact, the village hopes to remember Edna Sheary this year by holding an event to which other non-profit and charitable organizations that have benefited from her generosity will be invited.

“Edna was quite the lady and church person,” says Zetto. “Her impact in the church and community was never questioned. The trust helped extend that beyond her lifetime.”



For more information on...

charitable trusts, legacy goals, or other planned giving products, please contact Diakon's gift planning staff at (610) 682-1219 or, toll-free, at 1-877-DIAKON-7, ext. 21219.

Diakon Digest

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries offers academic scholarships to current and former participants of any of its youth programs. Funds provided by generous donors such as the Charles Merit Singer Trust are used to support post-secondary education and related training for youths served by these programs. In 2012, scholarships totaled approximately \$70,000. Early this year, another \$70,000 in 2013 scholarships was awarded to, left to right, Kaitlyn Fredo, Trey Faust, Chris Chilton, Derek Zug, Adam Ben Ezra, Keith Mutinda, Tylor Taggart, and Mike Adams.



Upcoming events

The Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community Diakon participates in Highmark Walks in Harrisburg and Allentown. Individual teams of Diakon staff members are participating at both locations to raise at least \$10,000 total. For more information or to support one of the teams, please visit www.diakon.org/giving/highmark-walk.aspx.

The Outdoor Adventure Challenge – 5K Trail Run and Fun Run/Walk

This second Outdoor Adventure Challenge series of events will begin at 9 a.m. Sept. 21 at the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pa. All proceeds benefit Diakon services for at-risk youths. For more information, please visit the Outdoor Adventure Challenge Facebook page or go to www.diakon.org/youth-services/outdoor-adventure-challenge.



Dining with Diakon Dining with Diakon is an opportunity to enjoy a unique culinary and networking experience. Guests socialize while tasting personal recipes from local business and community leaders acting as guest chefs for the evening. The chefs challenge one another to see who can raise the most funds in support of Diakon programs for children and youths and their families.



- **Central Pennsylvania** The April 2013 Dining with Diakon – Central Pennsylvania event raised more than \$162,000. Proceeds support Diakon Youth Services at the Diakon Wilderness Center.
- **Eastern Pennsylvania** The next Eastern Pennsylvania Dining with Diakon will be held Oct. 17. Coach Herman Boone (the movie, *Remember the Titans*, featured his life story) will be guest speaker. Proceeds benefit Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. For information and updates, please visit the Dining with Diakon Facebook page or go to www.diakon.org/dwd.

The President's Dialog *Continued from Page 2*

And always, when things turn out right, I recognize as well the vital support of those who stand with us, making our work possible through their prayers, volunteer efforts, and financial generosity.

In this edition of *Dialog*, in our annual *Donor Report*, we acknowledge all those who supported us in 2012. I want to extend my deepest appreciation

for that support. The stories in *Dialog* are just a few of the thousands you helped to make possible last year.

As we celebrate all those “right things” in life, I ask for your continued support and prayers.

Together, we make a lot of things turn out right.

Seniors-students Skype successful *Continued from Page 1*

It is also a great way to communicate with my daughter and see what her life as a teacher is like. I think it is wonderful the children have an interest in us.”

The program will run throughout the school year and may continue as a regular part of the curriculum. Nebistinsky, who received a grant to start a school garden this spring, hopes to take her laptop outside and Skype while the class is gardening. “Many of the adults have experiences they can share about having gardens when they were little, rather than just going to the grocery store for fruits and veggies.”

The program benefits both groups, Nebistinsky emphasizes. “The adults are so impressed with the simple fact that kids are interested in what they are doing or what they have to share. The students are learning that older people also like to learn new things and are able to use new technology. It has changed the students’ perception: It turns out ‘old people’ aren’t boring after all!”

Technology *continued from Page 1*

Her son attended as well—from his home in London.

Leroy Sauerwine moved to England as a young man. He would visit his mother periodically, but had never been able to take part in a face-to-face discussion with Topton staff about her care. That is until now, thanks to computer-video technology. Callers can see one another in real time, aided by a computer equipped with a webcam and a phone-line connection.

Plans-of-care conferences lay out a roadmap for staff involved in each resident’s life at Diakon senior communities. Residents and their families develop the plan together, guided by assessments and goals.

“The initial plan is done at admission with our staff and the resident and family,” explains Beth Bechtel, Topton’s director of social services. “We look at needs on all levels and how our services can help the resident have a full life.”

Bechtel is grateful that Grace and Leroy could connect via technology.

“This was a way for him to know what is going on, on a timely basis,” she says. “They were able to talk back and forth and discuss plans.”

The success of the first video-enabled conference means there likely will be more, Bechtel says. Details need to be worked out, but staff members have talked about offering the option in other areas of the Topton campus and possibly at the bedside for residents who are less mobile.

“We have done care conferences by phone for years, but this technology presents more of a ‘live’ opportunity,” Bechtel says.

Choosing Diakon Senior Living brings seminary president/family *peace of mind*

Hagerstown, Md.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE “QUALITY OF SERVICES, dedication of staff, and excellent leadership” within Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries made the choice of assisted living for parents an easy one, says the Dr. Rev. Michael Cooper-White, president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg

Several years ago he and his family chose Diakon Senior Living – Hagerstown/The Robinwood Campus for assisted living services for both his and his wife’s parents.

“Gettysburg Seminary has been blessed in so many ways by our partnership with Diakon, that I needed no convincing you all are ‘top-flight folks,’” he says. “Diakon’s faith-based status was an added plus. Since our parents left their home churches and were unable to become active in congregations in a new area, having an in-house chaplain and onsite regular worship has been a godsend.”

In 2010, Cooper-White’s brother and his family were looking to relocate to the East Coast. They also wanted to bring along their parents, who already were living in an assisted living community and relied on them for support. When asked about their willingness to make the move, they readily agreed.

“As the ‘eastern’ brother, I began a search for a nearby assisted living facility,” says Cooper-White. “I quickly centered on Robinwood and made arrangements for their arrival.”

Bennie and Alice Cooper settled in easily to life at Robinwood—so much so that when Cooper-White’s wife, the Rev. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White, began the search for an assisted living community for her parents, she focused her efforts on Robinwood. The

Rev. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White is professor of pastoral theology and care at Columbia Seminary in Decatur, Ga., as well as a licensed therapist and also a singer and artist, having sung with the San Francisco Opera.

“Given our very positive experience ... with Robinwood, she readily centered her search there,” Cooper-White says. “And we saw the benefit of having all four of our parents under the same roof.”

During their first full year at Robinwood, Thomas and Constance White joined the Coopers and became close friends and dining partners for their meals. (Sadly, Mr. White passed away in February. In the weeks leading up to the death, Cooper-White said the community was “fantastic” in its support of both his father-in-law and his family.)

“The seminary has been blessed in many ways by our partnership with Diakon”

Three parents remain at Robinwood

Satisfaction with overall care and responsiveness is nothing new. “I don’t think we could be more pleased” with the service their parents have received from the beginning of their stay, says Cooper-White.

“When my parents had to be separated for a few weeks after my dad took a fall and needed nursing care [on the Ravenwood campus], the staff were all pulling for them to be reunited. There were tears all around when their reunion occurred before Thanksgiving.”

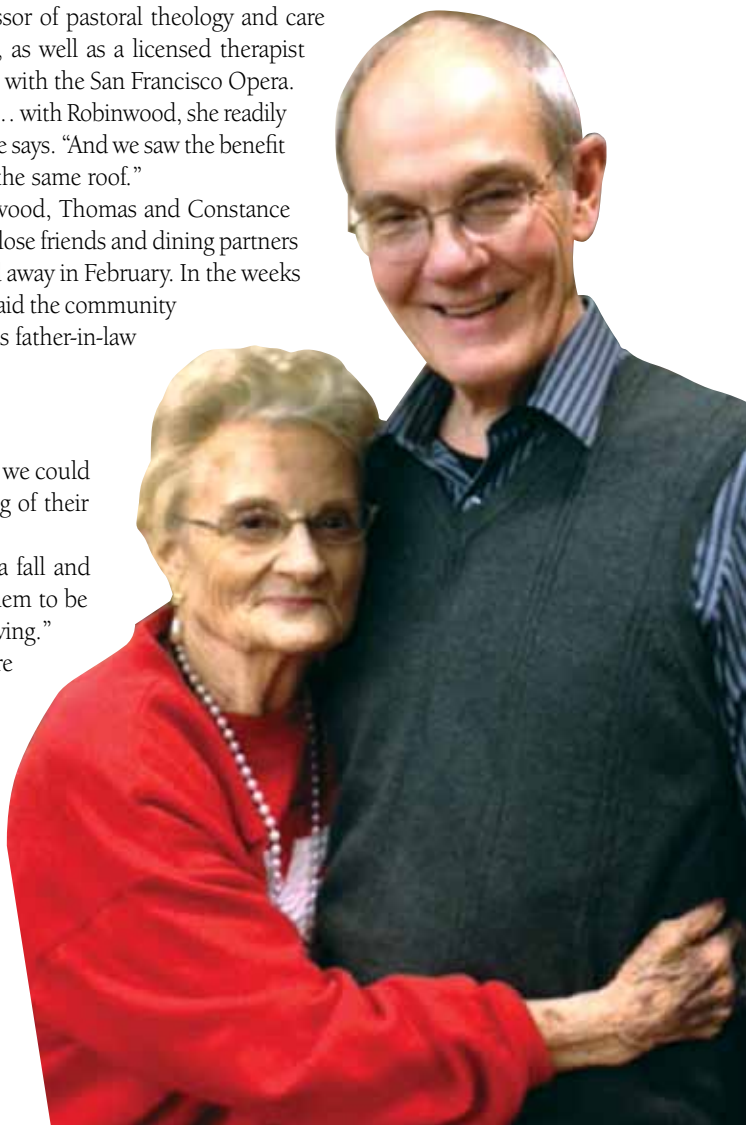
Knowing their parents are benefiting from that type of personalized quality care brings Cooper-White and his family peace of mind.

“We have been pleased at how the Diakon Senior Living personnel seem to know just when to let us know things are changing and decisions are required,” he says, adding that staff members respect residents’ independence and integrity but, at the same time, recognize that decisions regarding care are also family matters and that children appreciate being informed and consulted at critical moments.

“We have never second-guessed our common decision,” he adds.



In a 2003 photo, Tom and Connie White with Bennie and Alice Cooper



Alice Cooper and the Rev. Dr. Michael Cooper-White



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Skype helps senior living resident make long-lost connection.



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