

A MAGAZINE *from* BRIO LIVING SERVICES

Community

Special Edition: A SPRING UPDATE FROM BRIO LIVING SERVICES AND UMRC-PORTER HILLS FOUNDATION

Setting the Bar *at Brio*



Balanced Living class shows strength at Chelsea Retirement Community.



Excellence and Innovation

A Letter from Steve Fetyko, President & CEO, Brio Living Services

Brio's Guiding Belief of *Excellence* states, "We seek to excel in all we do through a passionate commitment to continually improve every element of what we do, as individuals and as an organization." We constantly strive to provide the best possible care and services for older adults, as well as our team members—often through innovation and technologies that make life easier, preserve resources, improve the ways we provide care, and promote the highest level of engagement, satisfaction, and joy for those we serve. As a result, **Brio Living Services** is proud to be recognized as a leader in the senior living industry.

In this issue, you will read about just a few examples of how Brio is serving as a model in caring for older adults; whether at **The Thome Rivertown Neighborhood** which continues to attract visitors, eager to learn about truly affordable assisted living; or our **Green House® Homes** in Grand Rapids that offer skilled care in a small home, person-centered setting.

By adopting technologies such as dining robots that are helping to streamline the dining experience at our Assisted Living dining room at **Porter Hills Village**, or creating a podcast that captures our residents' life stories, we are constantly seeking ways to enhance quality of life for both residents and team members.



I am proud of our teams and programs, across the organization, that are recognized—nationwide—for excellence and innovation. Recently, these have included **5-Star ratings** from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the highest possible rating, for our skilled nursing centers; and being named one of **Senior Care's Best Places to Work**.



Thank you for your support which makes these achievements possible! ■

In Service,

Steve Fetyko
President & CEO
Brio Living Services

Undergirding Our Success

A Letter from Kelli Smith, President & CEO, UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation

The UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation is grateful to each of you for supporting our mission. Your kindness and generosity truly undergird every success and accomplishment we achieve. Your caring handprints can be seen and felt at each of our Brio communities, PACE sites, and other programs, allowing us to provide exceptional care for those we serve.

Your gifts strengthen our ability to serve our communities, fulfill our mission, and ensure a future at Brio Living Services where all are empowered to age well! This includes:

- Building our endowment to support Benevolent Care for years to come for residents who outlive their savings.
- Creating physical spaces that support and complement older adults on their aging journey.
- Enriching the aging experience, through activities such as music therapy, wellness classes, Positive Approach to Care®, spiritual life, and much more.
- Investing in our team members through education and emergency aid to ensure their futures are bright as well.

Rest assured that the stewardship of all our resources — including financial, physical, and human resources — is our promise to you.

Finally, your love and caring for those we serve is the greatest resource of all and helps provide the vibrant living we all seek as we age. I am thankful for your partnership on this critical journey of service to older adults. Over the coming months, I look forward to sharing more with you about ways you can help us achieve our mission. ■



Brio recognized as Senior Care's Best.



With gratitude,

Kelli Smith, CFRE
President & CEO
UMRC-Porter Hills
Foundation



Meeet Charlie Brown, a resident of **Meadowlark Retirement Village** with a heart full of kindness. Charlie and his family wanted to honor the memory of those who have touched lives in our community, so they dedicated this beautiful plaque as a tribute. Thank you, Charlie and Maggie Brown, for ensuring that our cherished residents are always remembered. ■

Brio Communities and Services:

In November, Brio Living Services was chosen to host a pre-conference session at its **Cook Valley Estates** and **Green House® Homes** communities in Grand Rapids, part of the Center for Innovation’s 2024 **Grow Bolder** conference. Bringing together Green House® Project and Pioneer Network members, attendees at this session, entitled “Solving the Skilled Nursing Dilemma,” learned about the benefits of a properly sized environment, including improved clinical care, decreased staff turnover, better financial outcomes, and, most importantly, increased resident and family satisfaction. Presenters included Brio’s Chief of Residential Services Nicole Maag, as well as a panel discussion with members of the Green House Homes care team. Tours of Brio’s Green House Homes and Cook Valley Estates were also offered.

“We were honored to be chosen as a pre-conference host for leaders in the aging

services industry,” says Nicole. “To be recognized as an innovative expert validates our team members’ efforts and our organization’s dedication to continually delivering the best possible care and services for older adults.”

The Green House model offers an alternative to traditional nursing home care, provided in a smaller setting that feels like home. Ten to twelve residents live in each community with private bedrooms and bathrooms and shared living spaces that inspire interaction. Care partners, called Shahbazim, provide person-centered care, allowing residents the independence to choose when to get up, what they would like for meals, and what activities they wish to participate in. Brio’s two Green House Homes in Grand Rapids are among just a handful across the state. ■

When Ota first moved to the Green House Homes, she was on hospice and expected to live only a few more months. True to the Green House model’s three values — real home, meaningful life, and empowered staff — Ota began to thrive. In getting to know Ota, her care partners learned she had grown up on a farm and loved to garden, especially flowers. The Shahbazim made sure she could spend time outside by the raised flower beds in the community’s backyard patio. Before long, Ota no longer needed her wheelchair and enjoyed walking outside and tending to the flowers. Ota enjoyed a life of meaning and purpose for another three years at the Green House Homes. ■



Green House® Homes resident, Ota

Recognized as Industry Leaders

“**T**his venue is God-sent,” says Carol, the sister of a resident at **The Thome Rivertown Neighborhood Affordable Assisted Living Center**. “Rivertown gave my brother a new beginning, while allowing him to remain independent.”

The Thome Rivertown Neighborhood (Rivertown) in Detroit opened in 2013, a partnership between Brio Living Services, Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, and Henry Ford. Today, Rivertown continues to be recognized nationally as a collaborative model for truly affordable senior living.



Julia Szuper shares importance of Rivertown to GIA members.



2024 **Grow Bolder** conference panel hosted at Cook Valley Estates.

In October, Rivertown served as a site visit destination for the Grantmakers in Aging (GIA) national conference held in Detroit. The event was titled, “Thome Rivertown: Detroit’s Gem of Affordable Housing and Healthcare.” Participants, representing aging services funders from across the country, experienced tours of Rivertown’s Affordable Assisted Living, Senior Independent Living apartments, PACE Southeast Michigan, and the Weinberg Green House® Homes. ■

“Many of the residents we serve at Rivertown come to us with very few belongings and are in dire need of assistance,” says Julia Szuper, Executive Director of Thome Rivertown Assisted Living. “Rivertown truly embodies Brio Living Services’ mission of ‘Welcoming all, partnering together, enriching lives.’ We ensure that our residents get meals, social engagement, and the care they need in a secure setting along Detroit’s beautiful River-Walk. We’re making a critical difference for older adults in Detroit.”



A “Life Changer” for Kristina Thompson

Kristina Thompson has experienced a lot of life changes in the past two years, moving from Georgia to Michigan and starting a new job as Center Support Assistant at **Huron Valley PACE**. A “game changer” for Kristina, though, is having the opportunity to go back to school, thanks to a Scholarship from the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation’s **Team Member Support Services Fund**.

“It was fate or God,” says Kristina. “I was wanting something different in my life, and I felt that continuing my education would give me more career opportunities. Just as I was entertaining the idea, I learned about the Foundation’s Scholarship program. It really opened the door for me. I couldn’t afford college otherwise.”

Kristina started studying creative writing, but switched to psychology and is completing her studies online at Southern New Hampshire University. She plans to add a concentration in mental health to eventually become a therapist or counselor.

“Kristina is at the beginning of her career, and she has great potential to excel and add so much value to her work community,” says Denese Brown, MSW, Center Director at Huron Valley PACE. “Kristina is a wonderful investment for our organization.”

“I love the participants,” says Kristina. “I get to greet everyone as they arrive and get to know them.”



Kristina Thompson

Kristina adds that working with older adults has given her a new perspective: “Life is too short not to pursue one’s passion. Education is one of my passions and, with the aid of the Foundation’s Scholarship, I am able to pursue this endeavor.”

I hope that my continuing education will inspire my younger siblings to follow their dreams. Thank you to the Foundation and the donors who make this possible. It’s a life-changer.” ■

Making Connections



Sheri Hardcastle

We are pleased to introduce you to Sheri Hardcastle, Major Gifts Officer for the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation. Sheri first started with the Foundation in 2020 as the east-side Office Manager. With her experience in development at Siena Heights University and Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Michigan, she naturally transitioned to the role of Major Gifts Officer when it became available in 2022. Sheri excels in building relationships and linking donors with their passions in ways that serve older adults.

“Sheri has a remarkable ability to connect with our residents and the community,” says Kelli Smith, Foundation President & CEO. “Her enthusiasm and vibrant energy are truly infectious, evident to anyone who spends time with her. It's heartwarming to witness the joy she brings to those around her.” ■



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

BE ON THE LOOKOUT!



You may have noticed some hard hats and trucks on our campuses across Michigan. Our comprehensive campaign, **Live Life with Brio**, is under construction and includes Capital needs, Team Member Investment, Program Investment, and Benevolent Care. You'll be hearing more in the months to come, so stay tuned for more information from the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation.

New Robots Serve Up Smiles

Bonnie and Jasper are the latest additions to the Assisted Living dining room at Porter Hills Village, quietly delivering meals, piping hot, from the kitchen to the residents. “They have quickly become a vital part of the dining experience,” says Ann Marie Villareal, Senior Director of Dining Services, of the pair of robots that have recently joined the dining team.

The size of the Assisted Living dining room previously meant the wait staff had a lot of walking to do. “It’s a hike to get from the kitchen at one end to tables at the far end,” explains Ann Marie. “Now the robots can do much of the traveling back and forth.”

“The robots have been an awesome addition to the team, allowing them to spend more time with residents and tend to their needs more efficiently,” says Chef Manager Dante Owens. The robots are programmed with routes to each table, but will stop if anything is in their way. The cooks place plated meals on the robots’ three shelves, and the robots deliver them to the tables where servers are ready. The robots also help bus tables at the end of the meal.



Jasna Delalic, Dining Services Manager; Cody Andrews, Sous Chef; and Bonnie, the Robot.

“We love our robots!” says Andrea Darling, a retired health and physical education teacher who has lived at Porter Hills Village for 5 years. “We’re really fascinated with them.”

The robots look friendly with their animated eyes. They can say “Good morning,” play music, even sing “Happy Birthday.”

“No jobs are going away,” Ann Marie is quick to add. “The robots are helping to make our servers more efficient. It’s really surprised us all that they are so helpful. They’re not a gimmick. They are truly beneficial.” ■

Podcast Shares *Voices of the Village*



Chaplain Carl Pace and Porter Hills Village resident Kay Fellingner

Thanks to the state-of-the-art recording studio at Porter Hills Village (PHV), part of Brio’s recent renovations to PHV’s common areas, and the expertise of Chaplain Carl Pace, technology is helping residents share their life stories through a monthly podcast, called *Voices of the Village*.

Carl has been the Senior Pastor at True Light Baptist Church in Grand Rapids for ten years and has recently joined the PHV Spiritual Life team as a chaplain as well. He has his own podcast, called *Every Day Pastor*, to “help people with their faith walk,” says Carl. “Maegan Garlock, Director of Lifestyle and Wellness at PHV, thought the residents might be interested in creating their own podcast. It provides an opportunity for residents to share their life experiences, reflect on their spiritual journey, and try out the recording studio.”

Resident Kay Fellingner, a retired teacher, shared her story of growing up in rural Iowa, her long Methodist heritage, and her

great grandfather who started a Methodist church. “I was kind of nervous at first, but it’s a fun thing to do,” says Kay. “People who listen to the podcast—even my family—say, ‘I didn’t know that about you!’ Carl is very easy to talk to, and the equipment is top-notch.”

Carl adds, “All of us have a calling in our life. The podcast is a good way for residents to get to know each other and find commonality. It also gives residents the chance to learn about the technology, that it’s something they can all use and it’s not scary.”

Currently working on his doctorate, Carl offers Bible study for residents and rotates with the other chaplains to provide Sunday worship service. “I enjoy the sense of family among our team and the residents we serve,” says Carl. ■

To listen to *Voices of the Village*, visit:
<https://VOTVPodcast.PodBean.com>

In Memoriam

With gratitude and fondness, Brio Living Services and the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation remember the following team members and board member who passed away during the last year. May their lives continue to inspire our service for older adults.



Julie DeMarr, LifeCircles PACE

Julie passed away in April 2024 at age 58 following a heart attack. Julie served as a certified nurse assistant (CNA) at LifeCircles PACE (Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly) in Muskegon for nearly 11 years. Her compassion and joyful personality touched the lives of countless older adults and team members. Her supervisor, Tami Loyd, RN, says, “Julie was a dedicated and caring team member who took great pride in caring for our PACE participants. They truly adored her, and so did we.”



Dr. Pam Kidd, Trustee, Brio Living Services Board

Pam passed away in July 2024. The only female in her graduating class from Baylor College of Medicine, Pam completed her pathology residency and served on the medical faculties at the University of Washington and Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. She also had the opportunity to work with Dr. Anthony Fauci at The National Institutes of Health.

In 1998, her husband, Rev. Dr. Riley Jensen, became the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Grand Rapids. Pam joined a private pathology practice serving Spectrum Hospital. Upon retiring, Pam joined the governing board of UMRC & Porter Hills, now Brio Living Services. She shared her vast medical expertise as a member of the Quality, Ethics, and Compliance committee. In 2020, Pam shared, “It is a privilege to serve on the board. We have seen the exemplary ways our organization and Foundation support our residents and team members to ensure all are well cared for.”



Craig Vandebos, Brio Living Services Finance

Craig passed away in November 2024 at the age of 60 from non-alcoholic cirrhosis after a two-year battle and complications from a liver transplant. Craig was a devoted husband to his wife of 27 years, Jayne, and a proud “girl dad” to their three daughters.

Craig’s career at Brio Living Services spanned more than 35 years: as a caregiver in Harmony Hall, Porter Hills Village’s memory support neighborhood, to Senior Director of Finance for Brio Living Services. Jayne says Craig loved his job and had a heart for older adults.

Kalen Carlson, Brio’s Chief Financial Officer, says, “Craig cared deeply for the mission of Brio Living Services. He truly loved making a positive difference, especially within Brio’s affordable living communities. Craig’s dedication was evident in his work, inspiring others to follow his lead.” ■

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A Commitment to Serve Others

One way to make a meaningful and generous contribution, with potential tax benefits for you, is through a **planned gift**. A variety of planned giving options exist, such as: a gift through your will or trust, retirement plan or insurance policy, qualified charitable distribution or IRA rollover, stock gift, or gift of personal property to the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation.

For Brio Living Services Board member, John Nixon, and his wife, Cindy, an irrevocable gift



in their estate plan for the Foundation's **Team Member Support Services Fund** *"fills a sense of commitment we feel to help others in our community. It also serves a dual purpose of not only benefitting the team member through Scholarships or Emergency Aid, but the older adults we care for, as well. We now have a more satisfied team member who knows how much we care about them, and the older adults we serve also reap the benefits."* ■

Learn more at Foundation.UMRCPH.org or contact
734.433.1000 ext. 7397 (east) or 616.577.2297 (west).

