



Adult CARE CENTER

Executive Director Mike Pyle chats with participant.

sponsorship feature
By Resident Senior Writer & Photographer:
Anne Sampson / sampsona7@gmail.com

It's 10 am, and Chef Warren D. Jones, executive chef at Brandon Oaks, is delivering catering trays for lunch at the Adult Care Center on Roanoke Boulevard. He's training his assistant as they unload quiche, roasted winter squash, salad, pasta and carrot cake.

"It was quite a coup to get Chef Warren," says Ruth Parsons, the center's administrator. "Brandon Oaks is top end community. We want to be able to offer great food to our participants."

The Adult Care Center gives caregivers a respite by providing care during the day for adults who are unable to be home alone. Participants receive meals, snacks, bathing assistance, and experience activities like games, gardening, exercise, cooking, music, crafts and guest speakers. Assessments and medication management are provided by an RN, and CNAs provide daily hands-on care, interaction and progress notes.

With their loved one at the Adult Care Center, caregivers can maintain a job, leave the house for important tasks like groceries or banking, or have some much-needed personal time. Possible transition to a 24-hour care facility is delayed, and the caregiver's mental and physical health is safeguarded.

"Caregivers are very grateful to have their loved ones in a safe place," says Ruth. She drives to work every day from the Lexington area, bringing a participant with her.

The center originated 36 years ago when local Kiwanians recognized the need for safe and nurturing daytime care that would provide relief to home caregivers, enabling families to stay together. The first participants received care in a building belonging to the Salvation Army.

The Adult Care Center's current 7,700 square foot building was purpose-built

in 2008-2009, across Roanoke Boulevard from the Virginia Veterans Care Center and the Veterans Administration campus. It includes a roomy social/activities room, a dining area, kitchen, offices, conference room, sunroom, quiet room, a salon and a bathing room equipped with a state-of-the-art walk-in jetted whirlpool tub.

Participants represent a range of ages and disabilities, from young people with autism to adults with injuries or conditions like muscular dystrophy, to elderly people with dementia.

Shared activities like dance, music and gardening bring participants together as a family, as do special outings such as trips to see the Salem Red Sox (sitting in a personal box provided by Don Wilson of Evergreen Trust) or to Salem's fishing rodeo.

Participants can come to the center from two to five days a week, from 7 am



CNA Niki Bowers and Housekeeper Freddie Muse prepare lunch plates. The center provides nutritious, diet-specific meals and snacks developed by Chef Warren D. Jones of Brandon Oaks.



Headed to lunch.



Carolyn Reynolds, Greeter (SCESEP Senior Community Employment Program). Carolyn ensures that participants are met, signed in and integrated the center schedule.



Susan Richards, Receptionist. Susan starred in a well-loved commercial for the center based on a classic '80s ad Enjoli perfume. "She is the "face" for the center," says Mike Pyle.



June Patterson, RN manages medications and is always a few steps away.



Enjoying a Salem Red Sox game in box seats provided by Don Wilson of Evergreen Trust.

to 6 pm. There are a number of ways to pay for care, including Long-Term Care insurance, VA benefits, Medicaid and out-of-pocket. A Local Office on Aging scholarship is named for retired Executive Director, Sue Nutter, in honor of her "relentless dedication."

The center also offers a support group, which meets on the second Tuesday of each month, in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association.

"The way we describe the center is that we're a family," says Ruth. "It's a home away from home."

Executive Director Mike Pyle describes the delicate balance the center navigates as funding sources shift, affecting participation, staffing and practical things like paying the mortgage.

"United Way changed their approach from macro to micro-funding," he says. "We were heavily dependent on their contribution. As a result, we've doubled our fundraising efforts," adding new board members like Guy Byrd, who focuses on individual donors, and Lane Guilliams, who does marketing.

In addition, changes in the way the VA provides funding for individuals to attend has meant that scholarships are used more to keep participants in the program.

"We've done everything we can to make sure people can still come to the center," says Mike.



Ruth Parson engaging with participants.





Participants help each other get seated for lunch.



Among the activities participants enjoy are painting classes.



The sunroom is an airy space for activities or privacy. Outside, highway construction crews have been very accommodating, says Executive Director Mike Pyle.



Lunch is eagerly anticipated by all.



Members of the League of Artists volunteer to enliven the space with a revolving gallery of artwork.

The support the Adult Care Center provides to families extends beyond the time a loved one is there.

“One morning, the wife of one of our participants called me, really distraught,” says Ruth. “Her husband had a doctor’s appointment, and he wanted to drive. He wouldn’t get out of the driver’s seat.” Ruth spoke to him gently, identifying herself and explaining that the doctor had said he shouldn’t drive. “I asked him to slide over into the passenger seat and let the woman he was with drive. He doesn’t always know she’s his wife. I asked him to please do this for me.”

Distraught himself, he agreed to let his wife drive.

“This is when our mission really comes alive,” says Ruth.