



Looking Backward and Forward

A Surprise Presidency

By Garry Roosma

Observer Contributor

LITTLE DID I KNOW, when Jill and I moved into Kimball Farms in August, 2018, that a year later I would be asked to be the first vice president of the Residents Council, an office which is the stepping stone to being the Residents Association president. As the first vice president, I learned much about Kimball Farms' governance and the administration staff. Working with Dorothea Nelson, then president of the association, helped a great deal, as Dorothea had more experience living here and knew more about how things worked. Nonetheless, we never expected what was to come, but the pandemic hit the country, and in March, 2020, we were all quarantined, with most activities curtailed and meals delivered to our apartments.

*

During this time the council continued to do its work, and meetings were moved to the auditorium, where we could spread out and remain relatively safe. In order to get outside, enjoy sunshine and fresh air, and have some socialization, I suggested to the council and the administration that a grill be placed in the raised garden enclosure. After three months of back and forth, agreement was reached and the Garden Grill was created. The beginnings were rather simple, with an extension cord reaching across the garden area to provide limited electricity; some tents and chairs provided an area to enjoy cookouts. When the raised garden area was completely renovated, a large pavillion was built over the grill, with ample electricity, lights and ceiling fans. New grills, a refrigerator and a storage shed were also provided.

SURPRISE. Continued on Page 2



Photo by Lily Wayne

Past Residents Association president, Garry Roosma, left, and new co-presidents Ann Trabulsi, center, and Susan Dana, share views.

A Repeat Presidency

By Susan Dana

Observer Contributor

MANY THANKS to Residents Association President Garry Roosma, not only for his long service to the Residents Association and his ability to keep things running smoothly, but also for the many projects he initiated and carried out. Special thanks for the well equipped and comfortable cookout space in the garden and the Saturday night cocktail

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REPEAT, Continued from Page 1

parties. His focus on improving the opportunities for socializing carried us into a return to (almost) normalcy.

Much gratitude also goes to the other officers who helped the association run smoothly, and the counselors who helped new residents. We'd also like to thank the chairs of all the committees, and especially to the Committee on Committees, which coordinates the matching of residents with projects. The Education Committee has been reinvented, with an emphasis on speakers from both within and outside Kimball Farms.

*

This year, the association will try a new leadership format, with co-presidents sharing the duties. Both Ann Trabulsi and I have been association officers before. Ann was treasurer when I was president in 2016 and 2017.

"How we will divide up the responsibilities has yet to be decided," Ann said. "I imagine that we'll take on specific responsibilities, and then handle other tasks based on our personal skills and availability. While the presidency is a major responsibility, it is not overwhelming, and we want people to see that, so that others will want to step into leadership roles in the future."

Both of us have lived at Kimball Farms for some years, Ann since 2015, when she moved here with her husband, Ron, who died in 2018. Ann grew up in Brooklyn and went to Wellesley College, where she majored in economics. She and Ron moved in 1965 to Pittsfield, where their children, Liz and Larry, were born. Ann was a dedicated volunteer in the community, especially for Berkshire Health Systems, eventually becoming chairman of its Board of Trustees.

*

I grew up in Philadelphia and also went to Wellesley, majoring in history. After Ned and I were married, we lived for many years in western New York where our three children were born and grew up. Ned was an engineer at Westinghouse, and I was a product manager for Corning Glass.

When we retired to the Berkshires in 1994, we moved to Lenox and settled in a house on East Street. I've been a volunteer tutor for the Literacy Network of South Berkshires, the Lenox Library, Trinity Church, and the Lenox Garden Club.

We both look forward to working with you to make Kimball Farms a place where you feel safe and welcome.

SURPRISE, From Page 1

Following the two years as the first vice president, I moved up to being the president, with all the ensuing duties that that office entails. Kimball Farms at this time was slowly returning to pre-Covid operations, but the dining room was closed Saturdays, with meals delivered to apartments.

As there was little activity to provide socialization, I suggested to Mike Paglier, Director of Dining and Nutrition, that we have a Saturday evening cocktail party. He readily agreed and offered the Pub, which was not open Saturdays, as the venue. The cocktail party was well received, and it continues to be a fun Saturday evening event.

*

I cite the grill and the cocktail party as examples of what was accomplished during my tenure as vice president and president. Much more was done by the Residents Council and other groups to help us get back to normal, and even explore new ventures.

The committee chairs and their members were diligent, and they added to our dealing with the Covid restrictions. I enjoyed working with Sandy Shepard and her staff. All cooperated to make our life better under adversity, and they continue to help get us back fully to pre-Covid operations.

*

All in all, the past four years have been challenging and interesting experiences. I want to thank all of you for your support and positive comments along the way. It was a memorable experience, to say the least. I will continue to serve in other ways to help make Kimball Farms a wonderful place to live.

See Page 11 for 2024 Kimball Farms Resident Association officer and councilor nominees to be elected on December 4.

Friends, a Labradoodle and a Bank Mouse

By Dorothea Nelson
Observer Contributor

ONE OF THE NICER THINGS about helping with the *Observer* is that you get to meet not only new people, but their pets as well. This happened when I visited Claudia Wells and Finnegan, her nine-year-old Labradoodle.

She is charming and welcoming; He is friendly and eager to be your buddy.

Claudia didn't have to come far when she moved to Kimball from her home on Lime Kiln Road in Lenox.

*

Living in the Berkshires for many years made the transition an easy one. She's found a former student here, Pinnacle Store cashier Kim Burton, whom she taught in third grade at the Stockbridge Plain School. She's also found old friends, including resident Susan Dana, and she's made many new friends.

She first met Bob Wells, her husband, when they were high school students in Lee. At that time, they passed like ships in the night. It was a few years later, when each returned to Lee for a sibling's graduation, that a real connection developed.

By that time Claudia and Bob were living in New York City. She'd spent several years at New York University, where she earned an undergraduate degree in international relations and psychology, then turned to counseling for her master's degree.

*

During those years, she earned free tuition, thanks to her work at the New York Medical Center and the Ford Foundation. That time still leaves her glowing when she talks about the people she met. In the meantime, Bob, who'd always been interested in finance, was pursuing his career in banking.

The young couple returned to the Berkshires, a place they loved and thought would be great for

raising a family. He found work at Berkshire Bank, eventually becoming its president. Claudia taught at the Plain School until their children were born.

Among other activities, Claudia has been a member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Lenox, and she served on the board of Berkshire Place, a Pittsfield residence for elderly women, started by

the Crane family in 1888.

This volunteer experience sparked an interest in serving the elderly. She completed an internship at Mount Greylock Skilled Nursing Facility and became a licensed nursing home administrator. Subsequently, she worked at Fairview Manor, a hospital-based facility in Great Barrington.

*

Claudia is also a published author. Her children's book, *Whiskers, the Bank Mouse*, is available online. It describes a canny creature who weaves his way in and out of the world of finance.

You will be impressed that Colorado bought copies of her book by the hundreds to use in a statewide program on financial literacy. She's picked up pen again, this time to write a memoir.

*

Her two children and their families fill vital roles in Claudia's life. Daughter Heather lives in Lenox and comes by for daily walks with Finnegan. Her husband, Matthew, and sons, Matthew and Benjamin, are regular companions as well. Claudia's son Daren and wife, Maureen, live in Naples, Florida, with daughters Kathryn and Melanie.

Claudia's conviction that "every life is unique" manifests itself in her embrace of new people and new situations. She sings the praises of Kimball as a "welcome and accepting place." Seek her out; you'll be glad you did!



Photo by Lily Wayne
New neighbor Claudia Wells.

Taking a Chance on Kimball Farms

By Kathy Ness
Observer Contributor

MANY NEW RESIDENTS – especially those coming from Pittsfield and South County — are familiar with Kimball Farms before they move in. Others lived farther away but have children in the area and move to Kimball Farms to be near them. And others, a much smaller number, take a grand leap of faith.

*

One of those is Lee Clark, who first discovered the existence of Kimball Farms by roaming around on the Internet.

When Lee mentioned it to her daughter Jennifer, who lives in Copake, New York, Jennifer promptly came to Lenox and took the official tour ... while wielding her mobile phone camera so her mother could join in. Lee liked what she saw virtually and came to Kimball Farms from Novato, in Marin County, California, without ever seeing it “up close and personal” — a risk, she acknowledges, but one that has worked out happily for her.

Lee claims to have had an “ordinary” life, but our conversation touched on moves from her original home in Washington, D.C., to Panama, Los Angeles, back to D.C., then Chicago, Virginia ... and several stops in between, including a cross-



Photo by Lily Wayne
New neighbor Lee Clark.

country move in a U-Haul. Travel also included trips farther afield to many places in Asia and Europe. Not so ordinary!

Her education included nursing school and then, some years later, graduate degrees in management, education, and finally English as a Second Language (ESL). It was in Novato, a community with a large Spanish-speaking population, that she had her especially happy professional experience, spending 10 years teaching ESL and special-ed students in the public school system there.

*

In addition to Jennifer, who divides her time between Copake and Santa Fe, New Mexico, Lee has another daughter, Carey, who lives in San Rafael and is mother to Lee’s grandson.

Lee’s son Guillermo is living out his retirement dream, much to Lee’s delight, traveling the world.

Lee’s actual move to Kimball Farms was a bit unsettled, what with a delay in California caused by health issues, then a stay in Sunset, followed by a move into a temporary apartment here in July, but she is now settled into No. 209. And she hasn’t wasted time a bit, as she is already enjoying the improv group, writing and poetry classes, and rummikub with “a wonderful group” in the game room. Lee has also signed up to volunteer on a couple of committees. Any group would be lucky to have Lee Clark’s cheerful enthusiasm and energy.

Prayer for those growing older

Lord, Thou knowest better than I, in the sight of men, I am growing older. Keep me from getting loquacious and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject, and on every occasion.

Release me from craving to straighten out everybody’s affairs. Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful but not bossy. Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details.

Give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably good. I do not want to be a saint (some of them are so hard to live with), but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the Devil. Keep me where I can extract all possible fun out of life (There are so many funny things in life) and I don’t want to miss any of it.

AMEN Anonymous (Contributed by Tad Evans)



Photo by Doane Perry

Floral Exhibition Trip

Kimball Farms residents examine blooms during a November 8 field trip to Smith College's Fall Chrysanthemum Show in Northampton. Exhibition in the Lyman Conservatory's Church Gallery titled 'The Bell Jars: Lyman Conservatory and Sylvia Plath's Botanical Imagination,' explored Plath's interactions with Lyman, her time studying botany at Smith and how those experiences influenced the botanical images and symbolism that run throughout her work.

A Daughter Drew Him to the Berkshires

By Georgeanne Rousseau
Observer Contributor

Sterling [Dick] Reece arrived in Apartment 233 shortly after celebrating his 90th birthday with his first great grandchild, Henry Sterling Patterson.

Dick and his wife, Ruth, enjoyed 55 years in Dayton, Ohio, before moving to Pittsfield 51/2 years ago to be near their daughter. Now they have relocated to Kimball Farms. Ruth is at the Nursing Care Center, and he has come to join us in Independent Living, although he visits the Nursing Care Center twice daily.

Dick was born in the West and attended high school in Denver, Colorado. He credits an outstanding guidance counselor with suggesting he look at eastern schools. Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut was his choice.

He met his wife on a blind date at Connecticut College. They married a week after graduation in 1955.

After two years of military service and two years at Harvard Business School, a position at National Cash Register, now known as NCR, took them to Dayton for the whole of his business career. He retired as Vice President and Treasurer.

The Reeces have a son and a daughter, 5 grandchildren, and, of course, Henry Sterling Patterson.

Dick has been an enthusiastic fly fisherman, particularly in streams close to their second home in Utah. He has also played golf during what he described as a very happy retirement. He has enjoyed his short time here, and has high praise for the capable, helpful staff. This thoughtful man is a welcome addition to our community.



Courtesy Photo
Sterling Reece and great grandson
Henry Sterling Patterson.

A Bird's Eye View of Human Beings

By Peggy Braun

Observer Contributor

AS YOU KNOW, there are people who are bird watchers, but what you may not know is that there are birds who are people watchers. I am one of those. Our group meets regularly to share our observations and see if we have found any new species. We find you just as interesting as you find us. It is fascinating to see how different you are from us.

*

As a bird, I hardly experience weight. My bones are nearly as fine as my feathers. I don't lumber around the way you do, on those thick things you call legs. I simply leave my perch, using my wings to lift, and I land just as easily with my thin, clawed toes, which grasp a familiar branch—because branches to me are as familiar as the ground is to you.

I see that, when you give birth, there is a great deal of pain. My eggs mostly slip out with no effort on my part. All I have to do is sit on my eggs to warm them, and I know instinctively that my chicks will develop as they should. Since I don't think the way people do, I don't get restless sitting on my nest, wishing I could go see *Barbie*, or visit a restaurant my friend told me about, or buy that blue sweater I saw in *Vogue* last week.

*

And I don't have to cook; my mate feeds me while I simply sit, content to wait for what I know will occur. Movement in the eggs tells me they are ready. The chicks know how to break through their shells. Once they are born, my mate and I are totally devoted to them. Do I love them? I know you have something called feelings, but as I said before, we birds don't think. If I doubted myself for a second, how would I find worms and make my way south in the winter? I would be confused, and think some stick was a worm, and that maybe I missed the turn around Alabama. I wouldn't survive if I second-guessed what I know.

I am a female bird, and the male birds look a lot better than we do. It does help us choose a mate, but I do sometimes wish I could look prettier, the way human women do. That's probably the only way you have it better than we do; I prefer our way of life to yours; it's simpler and more direct.



I said before that I operate from instinct. I know what to do. I know how to find food; I know where to go when it turns cold, and I know how to get there. I don't have to make reservations, or wait hours to get through security, and I don't have to carry a suitcase, or squeeze myself into a seat that hurts my knees, and by the way, I don't have knees. I have an inner navigator, and I fly true to its guidance.

*

I know a lot without words or books. I know everything directly. I feel sorry for you, that you have to think about everything. It's very inefficient and causes all kinds of trouble. I don't have thoughts or feelings, but I do feel pain when I'm hurt. That's simply how it is.

You know your saying, "it is what it is." At the end, I die without fear. My song is gone, and that is simply what it is.

This essay was written for Ruth Bass's writing class.

A Long Look Back at Pearl Harbor Day

By Eileen Potash
Observer Contributor

IT WAS JUST ANOTHER SUNDAY, in December, 1941, and my two sisters and I were looking forward to our usual movie experience. A full-length cartoon, *The Reluctant Dragon*, was the highlight of the double feature that day, and we were thrilled.

But we were surprised to discover that our mom was not taking us. Instead, our dad was going to take us to the theater. He never went to the movies. But we didn't mind so long as somebody did the job. And he would take us by car, which we preferred, instead of the trolley.

So we all went off to the Marine Theater in Marine Park, a part of Brooklyn, New York, and settled in for a contented afternoon of movie going. Midway through, the theater lights came on, the picture halted, and a staff member appeared on the stage. He announced that Japanese planes had bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and that all military personnel in attendance were to report to their bases at once. I asked my dad what was happening, and he said that it appeared that our country was at war. It was dramatic to witness all the young men, both uniformed and in civilian clothes, racing up the aisles to exit the theater.

My sisters and I were immune to the significance of this event. We wanted the lights to go off and the movie to resume. It finally did, and we stayed to the end of the film. But then my dad, a police sergeant, insisted we leave. He stopped at our parish church to offer a prayer for all those we saw exiting the movie, before taking us home. He then departed to report to his police station. There was a naval air base in his precinct, and people feared a German submarine attack.

I was scared to watch him go, but my mom reassured us that he would be back. But then she added, "It's amazing! The first time your dad takes you girls to a movie, the world goes to war." He remained home on police duty, but never took us again! And I will never forget that "Day of Infamy."

This essay is from Ruth Bass's writing class.

The Kimball Farms Observer is written and published by and for the residents of Kimball Farms

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Who Was Dan Dorman?

The Dan Dorman Trail that encircles the Kimball Farm is named for the man who established it — a Pittsfield obstetrician and outdoorsman who moved to Kimball Farms in 1990. It follows a riding path through what was originally a horse farm.

Dr. Dorman (1911-1998) thought it would make a good hiking trail and enlisted his wife, Dorothy, and several friends to bushwhack the overgrowth. It opened to hikers later that year and was subsequently extended to Housatonic Street.

Signs approved by the Residents' Association were installed at the six entrances to the trail from the road that encircles Kimball Farms.

The trail was widened in 2008 to encourage greater use. Maps, available at the front desk, were prepared by the Trail Committee, which maintains the pathway.

Excerpted from *Kimball Farms: Twenty Years of Memories*

Pets Reign at Kimball Farms

By Cris Raymond
Observer Contributor

THERE ARE SIX CATS and seven dogs at Kimball Farms. Most pet owners agree that the animals rule the household. They *REIGN!*

Kimball Farms allows residents to bring pets with them. Animals are welcome, as long as the quality of life of all residents is not compromised. Upon the loss of a pet, residents are not allowed to replace it, except in extreme cases and with prior approval of the Executive Director.

We'll begin with the cats. Dogs appear next month.

*

Peggy Braun came to Kimball Farms in August with her six-year-old male cat, Redford. She took one look at this handsome blond-orange beauty at the Humane Society, and knew immediately that he should be named after the one and only Robert Redford!

The name certainly fits this friendly, graceful indoor-only feline. Redford was accustomed to running around a large glass-enclosed porch, where he could follow all the critters that came by. He now entertains himself by closely watching through the windows.

Doug Cannon moved here from Woburn, Mass., in August with his nine-year-old female calico, Lily. Since his college years, Doug figures that he has had about 30 cats, with up to three at one time! He calls Lily a flying Wallenda, after the daredevil circus performers who do high-wire acts without a safety net. Twice Lily strolled on the narrow ledge of her second-story balcony and jumped down to the parking lot, to the great concern of the maintenance staff.

Formerly an outdoor cat, she once slipped through her harness. Now all outdoor privileges have been revoked. Lily is confined to observing the outdoor world through a pane of glass. She doesn't leave the apartment, not even to walk the hallways. She is



Doug's watch cat, and with her on guard, he feels protected.

Lily has an automatic feeding station, where she heads when she hears the clock chime. She dines four times a day.

Pat Carlson, who moved to Kimball Farms almost five years ago, came here with two cats: black-and-white Willow, who is short-haired and almost 13 years old, and Winnie, a pure white, long-haired beauty about 14 years old.

They get along perfectly, and their only excursions outside are trips to the veterinarian's office or to visit Pat's daughter, who has a dog.

Stephanie Johnson and Charles Bonenti arrived at Kimball Farms about three months ago with their male black-and-brown mixed calico cat, Munro. Twelve-year-old Munro carries the family tradition of having a name

beginning with the letter "M." He follows Mimi and Mitsou.

Munro was six months old when he was adopted from the Berkshire Humane Society. He has always been an indoor cat who never met a dog. Munro believes that the hallway is an integral part of his apartment, and he does not like closed doors!

His family insists that he is sensitive to people's feelings, and he cuddles close if one of them is having a trying day.

Also, Munro can count. And he knows where the treats are stored. He usually receives four at a time, and he will slap the hand holding back the treat if he has been given only three.

Nancy King arrived here six months ago with Moxie, her 14-year-old, black-and-brown calico cat. Moxie, a rescue from the animal-protection agency Purradise, was an outdoor cat before moving here. She most certainly lives up to her name, which means full of pep and spirit!

She prefers strolling the halls to being confined in her apartment, sleeps next to "Mommy," and refuses to drink water out of a dish. Therefore, she has her own running fountain of water.

Be Kind and Read Jane Austen

By **Mary Misch**
Observer Staff

THE ABOVE ADMONITION comes from the concluding section of *Bitches in Bonnets: Life Lessons from Jane Austen's Mean Girls*, by Sarah J. Makowski. Although often flippant in tone, this book is a serious piece of work. Its content is based on 5 years of research, leading to a doctoral degree. It is relevant to mothers and daughters and working women, as well as young ladies in pursuit of spouses. Jane Austen readers of any persuasion may well find it of interest.

*

Along with giving a broad overview of the 'Janeite' culture, this author settles into revealing aggressive actions and motivations of certain female characters in all six of Austen's completed novels. In today's terms, these are the 'mean girls.' In Makowski's judgment, "Jane Austen, it seems, already knew us — her modern readers." Later, she says of Austen, "She knows that all of us are in our way mean girls, and she loves us for it." From each Austen novel, Makowski pulls out examples of aggressive behavior by a calculating woman or girl.

One of the best known is Emma Woodhouse,

from the novel *Emma*. According to Makowski, "The public and scholars alike unite in finding Emma manipulative yet charming; Austen herself thought her problematic."

Also, Makowski says, "Behind her beautiful clothes and proper manners, Emma is complicit in harming other women." Emma is, she says, guilty of the 'Queen Bee behavior' described by feminist psychologist Rosalind Wiseman.

*

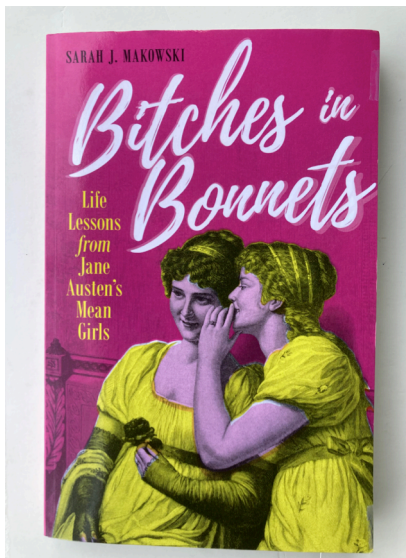
Makowski refers generously to recognized critics of classic literature and prominent psychologists of our times. She utilizes both groups to support her notions about Austen's significance for today. Her evaluations of Austen characters compare them with similar figures in today's world.

A key remark she makes is, "Like so much hostility between women, Jane

Austen hid her observations in plain sight."

As a mother of teenagers, and with a background in the business world, Makowski takes particular interest in all forms of bullying, whether in Austen's time or the present day. As a result, she lists numerous resources for people who have issues with it.

This book is available in our library, ready to shed new light on old favorites.



Nominated Kimball Farms Officers, Councilors to be Voted Upon December 4

Co-Presidents

Susan Dana, (1st year serving)

Ann Trabulsi (1st year serving)

1st Vice President

Patricia Steele (1st year serving)

2nd Vice President

Judy Glockner (2nd year serving)

Secretary

Bruce Bernstein (1st year serving)

Treasurer

Jim Tremblay (2nd year serving)

Lenox Councilors

Karen Carmean for 142-157;
(2nd year serving)

Stuart Dalheim for 158-175;
(1st year serving)

Carolyn Vandervort for 242-257
(2nd year serving)

Marilé Lynch for 258-275;
(1st year serving)

Stockbridge Councilors

Ron Stewart for 101-109
& 201-209; (1st year serving)

Dave Vacheron for 110-127;
(2nd year serving)

Eileen Henle for 128-141;
(1st year serving)

George Raymond for 210-227;
(1st year serving)

Sheila Smith for 228-241;
(2nd year serving)

Marketing Effort Having Success

By Jean Rousseau
Observer Contributor

THE MOST VISIBLE and significant event of 2023 at Kimball Farms has been the dramatic increase in the number of new residents compared to recent years. There is a new bustle about the place as we meet, greet and become acquainted with our new neighbors.

To understand what brought this about, I turned to the party responsible for it, Jody Manzolini, the Director of Marketing. Jody and her team have been hard at this all year — and will be until and beyond year end. It was hard to find time in that schedule, but she was very accommodating. Here is the story.

A bit of background: Jody has been with Kimball Farms for 16 years, first as marketing associate and since late in 2022 as director. She is a Pittsfield native. She graduated from Pittsfield High School and worked previously in several law and corporate offices in the area.

*

First, what has happened? Numbers illustrate the impact. Year to date, 2023 has brought us 23 "closings" and Jody has programmed several more before year end. This is a substantial increase from COVID-impaired 2021 and 2022 and compares favorably with historic records for the Farm. Some

arrivals come alone, others as couples. This year so far has brought us nine couples, which is a record.

That's the "what". What is the "how"? Jody described the turnaround in admissions as a

consequence of several developments: recovery from the COVID experience; record real estate values, particularly in the tristate area; and the addition of one professional in the Marketing Department.

The latter has enabled prompt action on closings and the move-in experience, more promotional events, and the further development of digital marketing efforts. The Marketing staff today

includes Jody as director, Susan Smith as assistant director and Kaylyn Holliday as move-in coordinator.

I asked Jody if she has seen any interesting changes or developments compared to earlier years. She volunteered that the geographic sources of inquiries has changed to some degree. Greater Berkshire residents and home owners continue to be the largest source of prospects. Maryland and Virginia residents have shown increased interest, but Florida and California stand out.

Newcomers are not required to tell exactly why they want to come here, but polite inquiries elicit suggestions that climate change is a distinct factor. Floridians who fled snow and ice here are now concerned with flooding there. Extreme weather and especially forest fires are a part of Californians' thoughts. Whatever your reasons, we welcome you.

Veterans, make a real effort to meet your new neighbors. Newcomers, don't hesitate to introduce yourselves. Do it twice; many of us are name-challenged. We are a welcoming community and glad to have you with us.



Maryland and Virginia residents have shown increased interest, but Florida and California stand out.

The Gut-Brain Connection

By Stephanie Beling, M.D.

Observer Columnist

MANY OF US HAVE occasional food cravings for mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, or a pint or quart of ice cream. For some, it's all about chocolate or the before-dinner cocktail. Whatever your pleasure, the goal is to feel better.

It is well known that food influences mood, but we are now in the midst of a research frenzy that is shedding new light on the complexity of this issue. For one thing, there is a direct communication between the enteric (gastrointestinal) nervous system and central (brain and spinal cord) nervous system. This communication can take place rather slowly via hormones in the bloodstream, or rapidly (faster than an eye blink) via direct connections from neurons in the GI tract and the vagus nerve going to the brain. Ninety percent of the traffic is from gut to brain.

Perhaps you have heard the phrase “the second brain” referring to the digestive tract. You’ve heard the expression “go with your gut,.” or “I’ve got a gut feeling”. The so-called “vibes” when you meet a new person or a new situation are mediated by the gut-brain connection and you are told to “trust your gut.”

There are 500 million neurons in the digestive system, more than five times as many as are in the spinal cord, and they are

filled with neurotransmitters. These are the chemicals that have a lot to do with mood. They include serotonin, which promotes a sense of calm and lessens cravings, dopamine, which sharpens attention and increases motivation, and norepinephrine, which heightens awareness and improves memory. Deficiencies in these chemical messengers are associated with depression, anxiety, and difficulties with concentrating and sleeping. Is it any wonder that fatigue, irritability and apathy follow.

Neurotransmitters are also made in the brain, but it is extremely interesting that 95 percent of serotonin is found in the gut. It is no wonder that drugs called SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) given to alleviate symptoms of depression often have GI side effects such as nausea and diarrhea.

The food you eat contains nutrients, and these are the building blocks for serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine. The macronutrients such as protein, carbohydrates and essential fatty acids have specific actions. Carbohydrates and fats especially have a calming effect, and that may explain why mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, cakes, puddings, and ice cream are often turned to in times of stress or distress.

Protein, as found in lean meat, poultry, eggs, beans and nuts, enhances alertness and motivation. Salmon, sardines, anchovies, mackerel and herring are excellent sources of essential fatty acids, so important for

Written for the October issue, this column was held over for space reasons.

GUT-BRAIN, continued on Page 10

GUT-BRAIN from Page 9

micronutrients, are critically important in maintaining mood, memory, and energy. These micronutrients are found in our colorful fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains, nuts and lean protein. On the other hand, a diet containing a lot of processed or prepackaged foods high in added sugar, salt, and saturated fat can worsen your mood. This way of eating is deficient in essential vitamins and minerals so necessary for emotional balance, good sleep, and gut and brain health.

What we feed ourselves also feeds the trillions of bacteria that inhabit our digestive system. Too much sugar and salt and too few nutrients destroy the balance between the “good” and “bad” bacteria, create havoc in our system, and may cause disease to occur. Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), obesity, metabolic syndrome, cognitive and mood problems are examples. To increase and maintain the “good” bacteria, choose high-fiber foods like oats, beans, pears, peas

and Brussels sprouts. The good bacteria love fiber. Yogurt and kefir (unflavored) containing live cultures of probiotics are also useful.

Another thing to consider is how your mood affects your food choices. Do you turn to food when bored or stressed? Do you overeat or make poor food choices? Mindful eating can help you pay attention to hunger cravings and your sense of fullness.

Finally, here are some guidelines to create a healthy gut environment and gut-brain connection:

- Eat a balanced whole-food, diet, and avoid processed, pre-packaged food with additives and preservatives that disrupt healthy gut bacteria
 - Increase fiber from beans, whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Include probiotic-rich foods such as unsweetened yogurt and kefir
 - Eat fairly regularly throughout the day, to avoid blood sugar spikes and cravings
- Hippocrates said it best: “Let food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food.”

December Trips

Saturday December 2nd Bus 2:30p

Lessons & Carols at Williams College with dinner at 6 House Pub

Sunday December 9th Bus 12:15p Met Opera Live in HD (1p-3:15p) Daniel Catan’s Florence en el Amazonas

Wednesday December 13th Bus TBD Millbrook Winery w/lunch at Four Brothers

Friday December 15th Bus 5:30p Hevreh Great Barrington/Community Shabbat & Meal

Saturday December 16th Bus 10a Lee Outlet’s, Kohl’s, Marshall’s

Birthday Wishes to our residents

Eight residents celebrate birthdays in December. There is a 21-year spread between the youngest and oldest celebrant.

December birthdays belong to: Sally Dunn, Eileen Henle, Laurence Potter, Elizabeth Brownlow, Joel Colker, Cris Raymond, Connie Montgomery and Cynthia Segal.

In Memoriam

Josephine Brunjes

May 1, 1924 to November 1, 2023

Patricia Curd

October 25, 1925 to November 18, 2023