# Caregiver CHRUNICLES

SPRING/SUMMER 2025



Lauri Harbison, MPH (left) **Executive Director** 

Dear Friends,

The longer I age, the more I come to accept that the one thing we can count on for sure in this life is change. And as singer Bob Dylan once crooned, "the times, they are a-changin'!"

I am convinced that the best way to weather change is by increasing and embracing community. Together, we look outward to find those being blown by the winds of change, invite them in and pull them close, and, by doing so, increase the strength and resilience of us all.

Our 30+ years of experience has taught us that it is much more difficult to reach out and say, "I need help," than it is to provide it. When it happens, however, what a gift of community results! Whether it's a new relationship with someone at home, or at class in the library or senior center, or even by one agency reaching out to another, the relationships that grow out of taking that leap of faith are extraordinary. Enjoy reading your newsletter—may it draw you in and pull you close, as you, too are central to the strength of our community.

Lauri

# Yolunteer Spotlight

Caregiver isn't just a word in Joan is a trailblazer in the field our name, it's who we are - and of home health care, having for that reason, we are thrilled authored several influential feature to standout a who has volunteer truly exemplified what it means to care. We hope her story will encourage and inspire others to join us in our mission and continue to spread love and care to those who need it most. Our volunteer spotlight shines on Joan M. Birchenall!



textbooks, including "Care of the Older Adult," which was instrumental preparing

healthcare personnel provide in-home patient care since its publication in 1973. Joan graduated from Cornell University-New York Hospital School of Nursing and worked as a Public Health and Visiting RN in New York for a year before taking a job with the Trenton Board of Education. Unbeknownst to her at the opportunity the (continued on page 4)

# 2024 Annual Appeal

The tremendous success of our **End of Year Match Campaign** would not have been possible without the generous support from donors like YOU. Your contributions not only helped us exceed our goal but also inspired confidence for our future initiatives. Together, we've set the stage for a year filled with new opportunities and innovative projects. Thank you for being a crucial part of our journey and for believing in our mission. Your continued support is invaluable as we strive to make a lasting impact in the lives of those we proudly serve throughout Mercer County.





## Luck o' the Draw

**Sue Bradbury** was the lucky winner of our first ever Luck o' the Draw 50/50 Raffle! Those who purchased a ticket helped Sue win just under **\$7,000**! When we called to inform her of her win, she astonishedly replied, "I purchased a ticket to support the agency. I never imagined I would actually win!" We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Sue, and gratitude to everyone who participated!



### Walk for Wellness 2025

Join us as we make strides towards improving the health and wellness of those we serve! Our 4th annual Walk for Wellness is taking place on Saturday, June 21 at Veterans Park in Hamilton, NJ. Check-in begins at 9:00 am. Walk begins promptly at 10. Consider inviting friends and family to come out and walk with you on a "team", or encourage them to show their support with a donation on your behalf!

**REGISTER TODAY!** icgmc.org/walkforwellness2025







Celeste G., John & Denise M., enjoying the food.



Raffle prize winners, Paul and Terry Cooper.

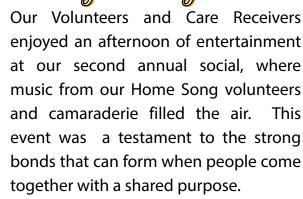
Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback from last year's **Volunteer Appreciation** event at the Kelsey Theatre, we were thrilled to present a second act! Earlier this month, our volunteers and guests were treated to a private screening of *Anything Goes*, followed by refreshments from Jersey Girl Cafe. This annual event is our way of honoring and recognizing the countless contributions of our selfless volunteers.



Anchors Aweigh! Some of our ICGMC Staff.

Share Your Success Stories! Small gestures have the power to make a significant impact! We are eager to hear your heartwarming stories of positive interactions, whether it's a moment of kindness, a shared laugh, or a deep understanding. Please send your stories or photos to kusuma@icgmc.org. By sharing these moments, you can inspire others and nurture a spirit of kindness within our community.

















PHB participants Janet V., Cecelia R., and Jorge R., walked for their bone health alongside Peer Leader, Carolyn S. (center) at last year's Walk for Wellness!

# Walk Your Way to Better Bone Health

Osteoporosis often progresses silently, leaving many unaware that their bones are becoming weaker until they suffer a fracture. However, increased awareness and proactive measures can make a significant difference. Walking remains one of the most effective low-impact weight-bearing exercises to help maintain bone density, enhance balance and support overall physical and mental well-being. Research shows that 1 in 2 women and nearly 1 in 4 men over the age of 50 will experience a bone fracture due to osteoporosis. Fortunately, incorporating just a bit of walking into your daily routine can significantly reduce this risk.

## Yern Applegate Award Recipient

Congratulations to **Doris Petruska**, our Project Healthy Bones Volunteer Peer Leader, for being awarded the **Vern Applegate Community Service Award** by the Robbinsville Hamilton Rotary Club. Doris will be honored for her remarkable impact on the community and her exemplary leadership skills. She has inspired many through decades of devoted service to the St. Raphael's food pantry and the Mercer County Master Gardener program. She has served as a Peer Leader at our Hamilton Library PHB class since 2012, with no plans of stopping anytime soon. Well done, Doris!







## Class Spotlight: Robbinsville Senior Center

In an effort to spread our bone-health magic, we launched an abbreviated 8-week PHB session at the Robbinsville Senior Center, crossing our fingers that the buzz would be big enough to roll out a full 24-week cycle in September! Not only did we have enough participants for a max-

capacity 20 person class, but we had an eager waitlist of people as well! Launching a 24-week cycle hinges on having at least 2 Volunteer Peer Leaders to facilitate the class, and we are currently seeking to train new people to lead here. With enough Peer Leaders, this class will be part of a pilot case study to get PHB recognized as a nationally accredited exercise program. The study will be led by Interagency Council on Osteoporosis (ICO) Chairwoman and Rutgers PT professor, Anita Van Wingerden, and Lori Morell, Director at Parker Life Monroe. If you're interested in becoming a Peer Leader, please contact PHB Program Coordinator, Maria Sergio, at maria@icgmc.org.

# Volunteer Spotlight (Cont'd)



relocate to Trenton was a decision that would define the trajectory of her career and impact countless future home healthcare professionals year after year. Joan established the practical nursing program curriculum which included selecting the students and choosing proper training equipment at what is currently known as the Mercer County

Vocational School.

Shortly after, JB Lippincott, a reputable medical textbook approached publisher, with the idea of writing her own book, having recognized the importance of elder care.

"My co-author, Eileen Streight, and I decided to create a book focused on caring for older adults. 'The elderly' seemed too harsh. Aging is truly a gift."

This textbook has been translated into several languages, including Japanese and French! Joan retired in 1991 after nearly 30 years with the NJ State Department of Education, where she held the title of Manager for the Bureau of Vocational Education programs. Since retiring, Joan

has found herself volunteering for not only ICGMC, but the Catholic Medical Mission Board and has recently been asked to be a part of the Princeton Area Community Foundation review their grants for women and girls. Joan has been a dedicated volunteer and supporter of ICGMC since 2022 Incarnation-St. James Church. Her 102-year-old care recipient, coincidentally, is also a retired nurse. Joan shares, "I look forward to calling and visiting her every week. She has no family nearby, so what provide volunteers as is incredibly important."

Thank you, Joan, for all that you have done and continue to do in the spirit of caregiving. This spotlight is truly well-deserved!

Joan's own words on the significance of Interfaith Caregivers:

"It's so important that older adults remain in their homes as long as possible. The services of the volunteers of Interfaith Caregivers are essential to making this happen."

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# Caregiving Tips: Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

Creating healthy boundaries as a volunteer caregiver with Interfaith Caregivers is essential for maintaining both personal well-being and delivering effective service. It's often tempting to become deeply emotionally involved in the lives of those you support, which can sometimes lead to a blurred distinction between professional and personal interactions. Here are some helpful tips to create and maintain heathy boundaries to minimize volunteer burnout.



#### **Consider your skills and interests:**

Volunteer opportunities should be a good match for your skills and interests. If you're volunteering in a role that doesn't utilize your strengths or aligns with your passions, you might not be as engaged or effective.

#### **Define Your Role:**

Clarify your responsibilities as a volunteer to avoid overstepping, and maintain focus on your tasks.

#### **Set Limits and Availability:**

Set clear expectations for your time, energy, and emotional capacity. Communicate your limits respectfully to ensure everyone understands your availability.

#### **Celebrate Your Wins:**

Acknowledge your successes and contributions as a volunteer. This can help you maintain motivation and prevent burnout.

Inform your Group Leader or ICGMC staff of any struggles, issues, or concerns!





We are excited to launch a new initiative! The "Cardinal Club," invites new legacy and recurring donors to support our mission. Becoming a member of the Cardinal Club will offer benefits such as exclusive updates, event access, and recognition. Monthly donations are crucial to ensure steady, consistent services to our community. More details will be available in the upcoming weeks on how to become an exclusive member.

## Donors and Supporters

## THANK YOU!

With the help of committed volunteers, a network of partner organizations supporters like YOU, Interfaith Caregivers provided wellness programs and caregiver services to over 400 local seniors in 2024. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following and individual donors corporate whose recurring donations and generosity of at least \$250 in the last 6 months has made a significant impact on our mission to help seniors and adults with disabilities age safely at home throughout Greater Mercer County.

Be on the lookout for our Annual Report, available on our website June 30!

#### **INDIVIDUAL GIVERS**

of \$250 or more. \* denotes recurring donors

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