

Summer
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Senior Healthy Living

Ethel Hamburger races to fund dementia care wing for Martins Run

By Michelle Woolford

Inspiration can come in many forms. For some, it's an exciting new experience. For others, it's the pursuit of a feeling of self-worth and accomplishment. For Ethel Hamburger, a resident at Martins Run Senior Living Community, it's as simple as the desire to bring good fortune and health to others.

Since moving into the Marple-based senior living community in 2007, Mrs. Hamburger has become fast friends with many of the residents. And she's come to appreciate the spacious and accommodating facilities that Martins Run offers, including a number of new amenities unveiled in the past year. But in addition to the exciting changes taking place at the community, many of the staff and residents at Martins Run feel a special unit is needed to provide the most supportive living space possible for dementia residents and support for their family members.

While Mrs. Hamburger has had the good fortune not to need supportive living services herself, a number of residents at the community do.

"Building a dementia unit is a frequent topic of conversation, but there just isn't the funding for it at this point," said Mrs. Hamburger. "So I decided to make it my goal to see that it gets built. There are a lot of people sitting in The Pines, Martins Run's personal care unit, whose lives and health could be improved tremendously if they had a resource such as this to help them."

Unsure of how to go about fundraising, Mrs. Hamburger decided to organize a race. She felt this idea, inspired by her son, an avid runner who has participated in the Boston Marathon and other races, would work well since it would draw a large number of participants. "By making the race intergenerational, we can cover all ages, from little grandchildren to seniors like me. I wanted even those who are limited in their physical ability to feel a part of the experience as well."

Starting last fall, Mrs. Hamburger put her plan into action. After appealing to the staff and residents at Martins Run, she sought support from family and friends. She unearthed her Christmas and Hanukkah lists to send a letter to as many people as possible, detailing the purpose of the race and asking for donations. To date, Mrs. Hamburger has received \$1,635 from friends and family alone.

Encouraged by her success, she kept going. She contacted every school district in Delaware County, 19 private schools and local colleges and universities. She has also reached out to synagogues and churches in the area, and plans to appeal to local businesses.

"We have received a tremendous amount of support thus far, and hopefully that will be evident by a large crowd on race day," said Mrs. Hamburger.

In Mrs. Hamburger's eyes, there is always something more to be done. And at the end of the day, she says it's her optimism and drive that propel her to push forward -- whether it is the fundraising run or her many other volunteer efforts.

Within months of living at Martins Run Mrs. Hamburger became involved in the planning for a Centenarian celebration. The resulting luncheon, recognizing those residents who were 100 years and older, was a huge success. Several years ago Mrs. Hamburger also spearheaded the creation of a community library in Arkansaw, W. Va., where her efforts led to the donation of more than 12,000 books to the new library as well a summer reading program for the children.

Mrs. Hamburger has no doubt that the race, appropriately titled Martins RUN, will become an annual event.

"As people live longer, the need for special dementia care and special housing becomes more common. We invite our friends and neighbors in the region to help dementia patients hold onto their memories for as long as possible, and to make their lives as rich and fulfilling as can be," said Linda Sterthous, CEO of Martins Run.

(The race will begin at 9 a.m., Oct. 3, at Ridley Creek State Park. For more information on Martins Run and the Martins RUN, call 610-353-7660, ext. 254 or visit www.martinsrun.org.)



Ethel Hamburger has planned a run to benefit a dementia unit at Martin's Run Lifecare Community.