

RICHFIELD

News about Richfield Living and its people

Life

Spring 2016



A weeping willow tree in front of the lower lake at Richfield began greening up in mid-March, foretelling warm days around the lake for outdoor concerts to come.



Ridgecrest residents Trudy Owen, left; Carrie Chittum and Mark Bonham show off some of the hundreds of plastic eggs they and Tina Nolan, Director of Independent Living and Administrative Assistant Cindy Suttles filled with Easter candy. The eggs and others filled by Knollwood residents on March 18 were for the campus Easter Egg Hunt March 24.

Welcoming Spring

Spring is bursting out all over the Richfield Living community, from blooming trees and flower beds to a campus-wide egg hunt, and an Easter Bonnet Parade at the Joseph C. Thomas Center.



While walking around the campus, Marie Spencer of Knollwood, stopped to admire the purple tulip magnolias that started blooming near The Oaks.

Seated Yoga soothes body, mind

Forgetting for a few moments their arthritis, stiff backs and creaking joints, students straightened their spines, extended one leg forward at a time and gracefully arched arms toward the floor. Eyes closed, they relaxed and breathed - sending their minds to such beautiful places as a favorite beach or thoughts of home.

The students who ranged in age from 60's to 96 were doing yoga, but with a variation. It's Seated Yoga, either sitting down or holding onto a folding chair. The classes are taught for Richfield residents by longtime Yoga instructor Virginia Balsarak.

Students managed "Child's Pose," standing straight in "Mountain Pose," "Starfish" which strengthens the body's core by lifting opposite arms and straightening the other leg behind them.

They did "Prayer Pose" and even something said to be good for the skin that involved roaring and clawing out the fingers called "The Lion."

One student balanced on her tailbone on the chair, tucked her bent knees upward by holding them with her arms and accomplished a balancing form of "Rowboat."

"I love Seated Yoga. It's good for your mind and body," said Ridgecrest resident Barbara Thompson, who has been taking part in Virginia's classes a couple of times a week for three years. Eenie Johnson and Janis Grabowski have been at it even longer.

Cottage resident Jennie Sue Murdock, who accomplished the Rowboat, explained, "I couldn't do that before we started these classes."

"My body doesn't tire from Seated Yoga. I think it builds your energy," said Janis, who added that she uses the breathing exercises she has learned. "If I feel excited over anything, I take deep breaths."

"I strained my back last night," Eenie said, "but it is feeling better now that we have been doing our yoga postures."

Barbara, Janis, Jennie Sue and Eenie have been working with Virginia Balsarak in Seated Yoga for three to six years. A newer class of three men and four women started up in early March in Knollwood.

"Teaching this group has been good for me," said Virginia, who has been teaching Yoga since completing her training in 2006. She previously taught regular standing Yoga and floor Yoga at the Yoga Center that used to be on Grandin Road. She began teaching Seated Yoga after her own knee got worse.



Freddie Stec, in foreground; Gail Hedrick and Tommy Gordon lift their legs to do a Seated Yoga position in the new morning class at Knollwood.



“The nice thing about Seated Yoga is you can still do many of the postures in a chair or holding onto one.

In the newer Seated Yoga Class on Friday mornings in Knollwood’s Alleghany Room, that day Freddie Stec, 83; Tommy Gordon, 69; Jewell Pannell, 91, who said she wants to loosen up her stiff hip joint, and Gail Hedrick – who is proud of keeping up at age 96 – were starting off with basic stretches.

“Pain is not part of yoga,” Virginia told students

“It doesn’t matter if you’re in your 60’s or 90’s. These are things you can do gently and you get the same benefits from Yoga. It helps you sleep, your digestion tends to improve, and we get more limber,” she said, as the class members did gentle twisting, facing the back of their chairs.

Another breathing exercise involves fingers on foreheads,



Jewell Pannell bends to touch the floor, and believes Seated Yoga will help loosen her stiff hip.

closing one nostril and exhaling through the other.

“This is useful for relaxing and organizing the body,” Virginia said. “It’s very useful for quieting the mind.”

“According to the literature I’ve read, yoga is also good for the cognitive abilities,” Virginia said. And she added, “The social abilities of our group keeps us on our toes. We laugh a lot,”

“It doesn’t matter if you’re in your 60’s or 90’s. These are things you can do gently and you get the same benefits from Yoga. It helps you sleep, your digestion tends to improve, and we get more limber...”

-Virginia Balserak

Weather forecasting improves but still involves guesswork

So if weather forecasting is getting more exact, what is the value of the weather man if he can't tell you the weather?

Those were some of the perplexing questions residents had for veteran meteorologist Robin Reed when he spoke the week before spring officially arrived.

Jan O'Connell, president of Ridgecrest's Resident Council, invited Reed, who is WDBJ-7 TV Director of Weather Operations, to speak in the Regency Room on March 17.

Reed regaled 40 residents with stories about how he got into weather forecasting. For more than an hour, they kept Reed busy with questions and observations about weather. Many of them have watched him for the 34 years he's been at WDBJ, they said.

In February for International Meteorology Day, Reed entertained residents at the Joseph C. Thomas Center. He is a favorite speaker for school groups around the Roanoke Valley, and also teaches at Virginia Tech.

"Have you noticed that weather comes in cycles?" Reed asked the seniors at Ridgecrest: "Storms are stronger, rain is harder, winters are colder, springs are warmer."

"I have a sneaking suspicion the planet has tipped a little bit," Reed confided.

"Never in my life has anybody in Appomattox had a tornado in February and snow the next week."

"Was this because of El Nino?" several residents asked.



"El Nino flips over and changes the weather," Reed agreed, "but El Nino produced lots of different things that kept us on our toes at work. For instance, we had 80 degrees on March 16," the day before he spoke at Richfield. "Today we have pollen in March," he said, to the groans of people in the audience bothered by allergies.

When he started out doing weather, "We used to look up and observe the weather," he told Tina

Nolan, director of Independent Living, who asked about the new forms of forecasting.

"Then we got satellites and could see the cloud patterns coming, for maybe three days of weather. Now all the observations are put in a computer model that simulates the earth. That gives us an idea of what might be coming for a week or 10 days."

Reed recalled the time he and other meteorologists failed to see severe weather coming. He remembered with audience members the November Flood of 1985, when his pregnant wife and their 2-year-old child had to be rescued by boat from their home in Roanoke – while he was at work helping keep tabs on the weather.

"Normally the Roanoke River is about 2 feet deep," he said. "That time it rose to 26 feet in a few hours."



One of the first calls Reed got from his wife, Teresa, that day was, “The water is coming up the street. What should I do?”

He said he asked his next-door neighbor how high the river usually got on their street, and the answer was “Not more than the top of the car tires.”

More calls followed, and eventually Reed got a call from his wife saying water was running through the house and she and their child were on the second floor. Next she called to say “There is a man here in a boat. What should I do?” he said. And he told her she better get out through the window.

“Our 2-year-old thought that was so cool,” Reed said.

Because he was a weatherman who didn’t know a century-high flood was coming, people came from miles away to gawk at his house after the waters receded, Reed said.

Fellow employees collected and presented the young family with \$2,000 in donations to help them restore normalcy to their lives. That gesture convinced Reed to stay in the area.

Reed referred to the huge outpouring of concern and love – and homemade food – for the Channel 7 family earlier this year when Channel 7’s morning reporter Allison Parker and camera man Adam Ward were fatally shot by a disgruntled former employee.

“We discovered in our grief all we have is each other,” Reed said.

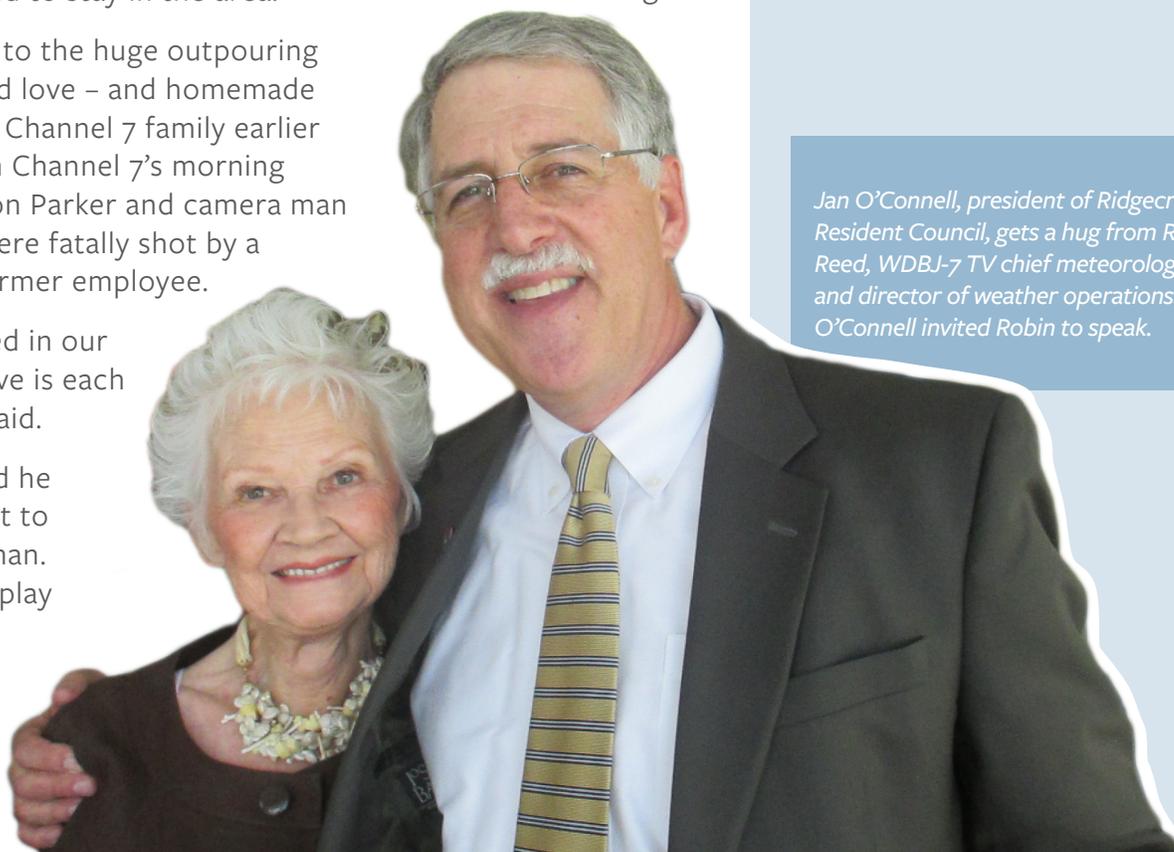
Reed explained he didn’t start out to be a weatherman. He wanted to play professional baseball. His dad had played for the minor

leagues, the St. Louis Browns that became the Orioles.

Robin Reed tried out for the Texas Rangers, but his mother insisted he was going to college. He went to then-James Madison College, now JMU, and “played baseball but didn’t go to math class.” After he flunked math, his mother insisted he quit baseball. He graduated with a degree in communications and broadcasting for a station in Harrisonburg. By a fluke, Channel 7’s Hal Grant was in town and saw Reed filling in when the “weather girl” didn’t show up at the TV station in Harrisonburg.

Reed admitted on that day he didn’t know a thing about weather except his sister, who lived in Montana, said it was cold, he knew Texas was hot and weather was nice in Virginia that day.

He went back to school, learned meteorology and continues to learn the latest technology. He still stands in front of a blank green screen wall but looks at weather models off screen to his left and right – and backwards from what viewers see.

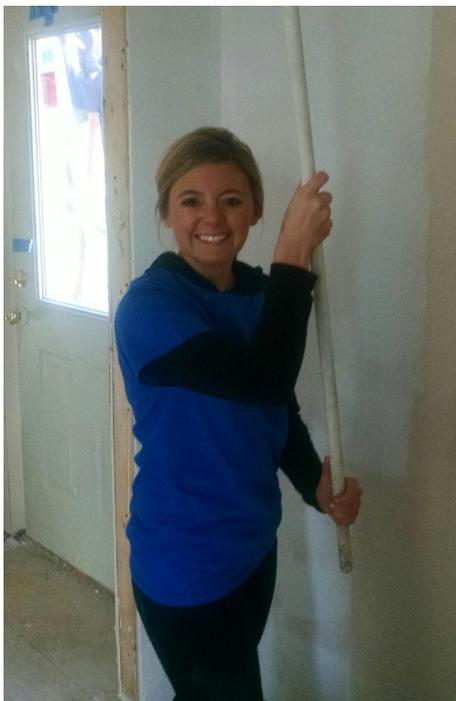


Jan O’Connell, president of Ridgecrest’s Resident Council, gets a hug from Robin Reed, WDBJ-7 TV chief meteorologist and director of weather operations. O’Connell invited Robin to speak.



Richfield Living employees volunteer with Habitat for Humanity

to assist with building a beautiful home for a single mother and her family

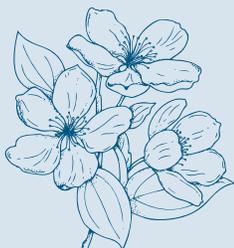




Celebrating Easter at Richfield



Easter Bunny babe Katherine Howard of Knollwood was an elegant bunny, complete with dressy blouse and cottony tail, for the campus-wide Easter Egg Hunt on March 24.



Phyllis Morris of Ridgecrest admires some chocolate-filled eggs from the hunt.

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of my left leg. I was walking on the bottom of my foot, so I had to strengthen it.” He remembers 12 people in his neighborhood in Roanoke came down with polio when he did.

With determination and work, he grew up strong and athletic, fishing, landscaping his yard, bowling on a league and playing golf. Today he’s doing well to walk from the parking lot of Knollwood Apartments where he moved five months ago.

Around campus, he uses Richfield’s provided van transportation. That and the Wellness Center were selling points for him to move to Knollwood, he said, “and there’s always somebody to talk to. They’re always laughing.”

He helps other residents out by giving rides and doing errands for them when he can. “I’ll be older myself one of these days,” he added.

Tommy was strong and athletic when he was growing up and when he worked for the former Moore’s building supplies business. “I remember when I was a kid, my dad, Tom Gordon Sr., and I would come up somewhere near here and walk

miles through the mountains to squirrel hunt, and to see my Aunt Bert. She used to live in a log cabin. We’d bring her the newspapers, and she glued them on her walls.”

Tommy gets to know other Knollwood residents by sitting and talking with them in the lobby for a while most days. And sometimes he shares his favorite recipes. Here’s one for summer, which he calls simply, “Fluff.”

Recipe for “Tommy Gordon’s Fluff”

- 1 medium container of Cool Whip, slightly thawed
- 1 pint cottage cheese
- 1 can mandarin oranges
- 1 can crushed pineapple
- 1 package strawberry sugar-free Jell-O

Sprinkle Jello-O over Cool Whip and fold in. Gently stir in other ingredients. Chill and eat.

Pushing Back Against Polio - Again

Tommy Gordon Jr. is fighting against polio again – more than 60 years after he contracted the crippling disease when he was a baby.

He was diagnosed with polio when he was 18 months old. Now at age 69, the Knollwood resident is pushing back against post-polio syndrome which causes pain and weakness in his legs. But Tommy is determined to keep walking on his own, steadying himself with a metal cane.

“I have to watch every step I take,” Tommy explained. “If I don’t, I’ll fall.”

“I’m trying to heal myself,” he said, adding, “I don’t want to end up in an electric cart or a wheel chair.”

“Feel this muscle,” he said, offering his rock-hard left bicep. At least three mornings a week and even on weekends, you can find him in Richfield’s Wellness Center working out for almost an hour. He’s doing the equivalent of “pumping iron” today: bicep and tricep curls, using the “Push and Pull” machine to raise 35 pounds over his head, pitting



Tommy Gordon lifts 35 pounds of weight over his head using the overhead press, as he works out in Richfield’s Wellness Center to build his upper body strength to combat weakness from post-polio syndrome.

himself against the Chest Press, Seated Row resistance machines and more.

Wellness Center Program Manager Rob Smith says he believes Tommy is getting stronger. “He does a lot on his own with the machines and exercises,” Rob says.

He needs those upper body muscles to propel himself when he walks using a metal cane in his right hand, and to push himself up off

the floor on those rare instances when he falls, explained Tommy, who has also recently joined a beginners Seated Yoga class at Richfield.

He also drives himself two-and-a-half hours to Clemmons, N.C., to see daughter Kristi Moncrieff and his three grandchildren, ages 23, 18 and 16. Tommy drives over to see his sister, Linda and husband Tim Scott in nearby Cherokee Hills, and brothers Sherrill of Boones Mill and Timothy and Paul in Cloverdale.

As a child, he remembers “three or four surgeries and one leg was shorter than the other. One of the things doctors did was put staples in the bones

(continued page 7)



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OUR MISSION:

Helping individuals experience life to the fullest, through every phase of their journey.

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