



Bella's visits bring comfort and smiles!

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A SPECIAL VOLUNTEER'S GIFT OF CONNECTION

On Monday mornings, something special happens at St. Benedict's Community in St. Cloud. The doors open, paws hit the floor, and a ripple of smiles follows. Amie arrives with her therapy dog, Bella, generously giving their time to brighten residents' day.

In the spirit of **National Volunteer Week**, April 19 to April 25, Ecumen celebrates volunteers like Amie and Bella who put their generosity into action and bring heart to our communities for three years.

To residents living at St. Benedict's, Bella is a familiar friend, a source of comfort, and a moment of pure joy. Bella knows the routine when she arrives. She joyfully bursts inside and runs to friends awaiting her visit. "She has people that she sees on a regular basis," Amie shares, "She just loves being here. It's fun to walk down the hall and everybody knows who she is and everybody says, 'Bella's here!'"

For residents who cherish the joy of a pet, having one of their own is not always possible. Bella's visits help fill that space with warmth and companionship. "For Bella to visit and fill that void of not having a pet, even if it's just her coming into the room and saying hi, can make a day better."

Amie understands the science behind it. "The companionship that a pet brings can have psychological benefits," she says. **The calming presence of animals is known to reduce stress**

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Your support brings music, massage, and a calming presence.

BECAUSE OF YOU: COMFORT WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

When words are not enough, a gentle touch or a familiar melody brings calm in the midst of uncertainty. That is the power of integrative hospice care that embraces the whole person.

Many of the most meaningful services in hospice care are not covered by insurance, yet they are often the very things families remember most. **Integrative therapies like music, massage, and aromatherapy do more than ease physical symptoms.** They reduce anxiety, relieve pain, improve sleep, and create meaningful connections at the bedside.

Alice*, the spouse of a hospice patient, shares her experience:

"The music and massage visits brought peace and compassion during a difficult time. It meant everything to our family."

Generous donors like you and the **Hennepin Healthcare Foundation** make sure that financial hardship isn't a barrier to compassionate care. This allows hospice patients to receive care and services without added financial stress.

Knowing that the cost is too much for some families to bear, we are grateful for donors who invest in these services, so they remain accessible to those who need them most.

With continued donor investment, we plan to:

- expand music and massage therapy hours to meet growing demand;
- grow our new aromatherapy program, investing in team training and supplies;
- serve additional hospice patients with comfort-focused care.

Because of you, hospice patients are surrounded not only with excellent medical care, but with comfort that can be heard in a song, felt in a gentle touch, and experienced in a peaceful presence. This compassionate care reaches beyond the patient, helping families maximize precious time together while gently supporting them through the journey of grief.

Thank you for making this extraordinary care possible!

**Name changed to respect privacy*

JOY THAT FLOWS BOTH WAYS



Volunteers and supporters like Jolene create connections.

Volunteers and donors like you make meaningful moments possible!

Jolene, a volunteer and donor at Ecumen Meadows in Worthington, genuinely loves being around older adults and hearing their stories. As she shares, "I have always enjoyed spending time with people that have so much life experience. They are interesting to talk too...they have lived through decades of changes."

For more than 15 years, Jolene has been part of the Meadows community and her longevity speaks volumes. Because of her background and life experience, she is at ease with residents with dementia, a gift that is especially meaningful in Memory Care. Her calm presence and natural comfort help residents feel safe, seen, and valued.

As residents participate in crafts, exercise classes, and entertainment, Jolene joins in to support the vibrant programming. "It's fun for me to do what I can to help," she says, "**The residents and staff keep me coming back. Everyone is so appreciative of everything, even the little things.**"

Behind many of these experiences is Cheryl Dinsmore, Life Enrichment Manager, whose leadership creates daily opportunities for connection. As Jolene shares, "Cheryl offers so much to keep them busy. Entertainment, crafts, exercise, outings to fun destinations and more... what's not to love?" And it goes beyond activities. "**It's not just the crafts it's also the fellowship with other residents.**"

Cheryl knows volunteers like Jolene are

truly invaluable. They expand what's possible for residents by adding warmth, creativity, and personal connection. **With the support of volunteers and donors, cherished programs can continue, and team members are able to focus on other vital needs.**

Jolene embodies that spirit fully. She pitches in wherever and however she is needed because she simply loves making a difference. "**The joy flows both ways,**" she shares, "Volunteering at Meadows brings me as much joy as I hope it brings to the residents."

Volunteers and donors like you and Jolene create communities filled with laughter, song, and belonging. **Thank you for creating moments that truly matter!**

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YOUR GIVING. YOUR WAY.

Do you have a Donor Advised Fund (DAF)?

Supporting your community is easy through a DAF distribution. Simply contact the sponsoring organization and recommend a grant from your fund to: **Ecumen (Tax ID 41-0711588)**

Mailing address: PO Box 64002, Saint Paul, MN 55164-0002

You can direct your contribution to a specific Ecumen community, program, or purpose.

For questions about recommending grants from a DAF or to learn about other tax-wise ways to give, contact philanthropy@ecumen.org or **651-627-0379**.

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and anxiety and bring about feelings of greater emotional well-being. This is another way that Ecumen, through the dedication of service and therapy animals, provides holistic and integrative care to address all residents' needs.

One moment in particular stays with Amie and the care team. A resident who once eagerly awaited Bella's visits began to decline and withdraw. On one visit, Amie gently asked if she wanted to see Bella. She opened her eyes and started laughing, stunning team members! This resident hadn't shown so much emotion in a very long time, but **that brief moment with Bella brought laughter, touch, and connection back into the room.** "It's just amazing to have that impact."

For Amie, volunteering is not an obligation, it is a gift she protects fiercely. "I always say Mondays are my day for therapy. I'm not giving

up Mondays." Bella naturally leans into the role, seeming to know exactly who needs her companionship the most.

Amie is continually moved by the residents' warmth. "The residents are so gracious and they're so welcoming and they want to know how your day is going." And as she puts it, "**The joy of coming here to volunteer is unbelievable...You get way more than you give.**"

Thanks to generous volunteers, moments like these are possible. You create spaces of connection and joy, sometimes arriving on four legs with a wagging tail!

See Bella in action!



WELCOMING A NEW LEADER

After a national search, the Ecumen Board of Trustees has selected Cyrus Batheja, EdD, MBA, RN, FAAN, as Ecumen's next President and Chief Executive Officer. He began his role on March 23.

Dr. Batheja is a nationally recognized health care leader with more than two decades of experience advancing care models that connect health care, housing, and community services.

Prior to joining Ecumen, he served in leadership roles with UnitedHealthcare and Optum, leading nurses who deliver care and therapies to patients across the country. In 2022, he was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

He describes his leadership philosophy with



a simple but powerful vision: creating homes we would be proud to live in and providing care we would be grateful to receive.

Dr. Batheja says, **"I am deeply grateful to our donors, whose generosity makes this work possible.** Your support not only sustains our mission, but also helps create meaningful, compassionate experiences for the individuals and

communities we serve. As I begin my journey with Ecumen, I look forward to meeting many of you and continuing this important work together, providing homes we would be proud to live in and care we would be grateful to receive."

We look forward to the leadership Dr. Batheja will bring and to the opportunities ahead for Ecumen and for the people we serve.

THANK YOU, SHELLEY!

Shelley Kendrick has been an incredible advocate and ally to Ecumen's communities and programs for more than 14 years. In the last seven years, she provided leadership as Ecumen's President & CEO.

Shelley retired from Ecumen at the end of March in order to spend more time with her family. Of her time at Ecumen, she says, **"It was an honor to lead Ecumen and work alongside our talented team members, and with all of our generous donors.** Because of our team members and donors, we were able to find innovative solutions to provide affordable homes and caring services to help older adults live a life full of joy, love, and purpose."



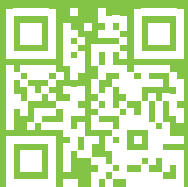
Marcia Kull, Chair of Ecumen's Board of Trustees, says, "Less than a year after Shelley took the helm, COVID hit—with no playbook. We had to adapt daily: caring for residents and clients, protecting our team members, and supporting families. Shelley's expertise and calm, deliberate leadership guided

Ecumen through these challenges and helped us emerge financially stronger and ready for what's next."

Everyone at Ecumen is incredibly grateful for her leadership. Thank you, Shelley! You will be truly missed, and we wish you all the best.



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ecumen.org/give.

As demand for quality senior care continues to grow, and government aid decreases, Ecumen is grateful for the generous contributions of donors like you, who help us empower individuals and families to confidently navigate aging so that it is a purposeful journey filled with dignity and support.

