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# Caring CONNECTIONS



Ohio Living  
Foundation

# VR Program Inspires Spirit of Adventure, Tears of Joy

## Ohio Living Breckenridge Village Goes High-Tech

For residents at Ohio Living Breckenridge Village, a trip to Budapest, Africa or their childhood home is just a headset away. In January 2021, the Willoughby-based community rolled out its in-house virtual reality (VR) program to rave reviews. They have facilitated more than 300 virtual adventures so far this year, even garnering the “Top Community of the Month” spot amongst all users of the platform in May 2021.

Cassandra Gubernath-Maier, an activities coordinator at the life plan community, is the heart and brains behind the effort.

“My background is in exercise physiology, and I’m passionate about keeping our residents healthy and active, in every way, for as long as possible,” said Gubernath-Maier. “I learned a lot about the benefits of VR while earning my master’s degree. It provides engagement, stimulation, and it can also increase dopamine levels, which in turn, serves as a mood enhancer. Pre-COVID, we partnered with a vendor to provide VR experiences a few times a month for our residents across service levels, but it was so popular and well-received that we really wanted to create our own in-house program.”

The Ohio Living Breckenridge Village team added this idea to their wish list, and just in time for Christmas 2020, their wish came true. Funds from the Lifelong Learning and Enrichment Endowment, as well as several generous donors, were combined to purchase 14 VR headsets, two Samsung tablets and a dedicated VR platform, fueled by Rendever.

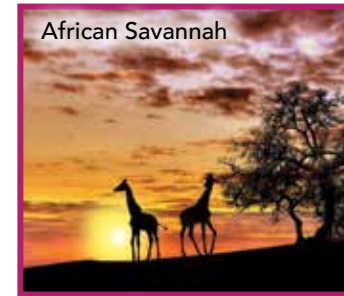
Rendever leverages Google Street View technology to present a 360-degree view of familiar and faraway places, from a house to the Eiffel Tower. Interactive games including “I Spy” and “Balloon Popper,” as well as relaxing activity guides are also available via the platform.

VR sessions are hosted across all levels of care, in both a scheduled and ad hoc capacity. VR headsets are adjustable to accommodate each resident’s level of mobility, and the interactive view can even be simultaneously shown on a television, so a group can “travel” together.



A resident at Ohio Living Breckenridge Village enjoying a VR session

Here are a few memorable destinations residents have been able to travel to:



“There are so many incredible stories I could tell you,” Gubernath-Maier explained. “During one VR session, a resident was eager to see her childhood home. When we typed in the address, she was also able to see a tree in the front yard that she had planted as a young girl. The memories we’re able to help spark are really special.”

A multitude of studies have shown the positive effects and applications of VR with aging adults. According to the National Institutes of Health, VR exercises have been shown to facilitate improved physical outcomes (e.g. enhanced motor ability) and cognition. It has also been observed to reduce social isolation and serve as an effective intervention strategy for fall prevention.

“I think it’s fantastic, since we can’t really travel anymore – it is just like being there,” expressed Susan Brown, an independent living resident at Ohio Living Breckenridge Village. “I’ll never forget the elephants coming out of the water and right up to my face. This program has been such a blessing and everyone who tries it comes back for more.”

Another powerful function of the innovative VR technology is an ability to custom design experiences within the platform. Photos, videos and even a script can be customized and uploaded to provide a personalized experience for users.

“We had one couple who had always wanted to travel to Budapest, but the trip never came to fruition,” shared Gubernath-Maier. “We researched the sites in Budapest and created a special itinerary for them. The husband was residing in hospice care, and we were able to provide this meaningful experience to journey to a whole new world. They were both really grateful.”

In the future, the team hopes to activate a special feature of the Rendever platform that will allow family and friends to upload their own photos, videos and scripts, to further personalize sessions.

Thank you to all of the individuals who have made this VR rollout possible. The lives of our residents and staff will be enriched for years to come as this program continues to grow in scope and influence.



# Ohio Living Dorothy Love Chapel Celebrates 20 Years with Refurbishments, Upgrades



Ohio Living’s mission recognizes the meaningful relationship between physical, mental and spiritual well-being. For the past twenty years, the Peg and Oliver Amos Chapel at Ohio Living Dorothy Love has served as a dedicated space for worship, prayer and meditation. Recent refurbishments and upgrades to the space have positioned it to uplift residents, staff and their families for many years to come.

The 2,000-square-foot, octagon-shaped chapel was dedicated November 12, 2000, and funded by more than 100 generous donors. As time passes, donations continue to play a pivotal role in preserving the space.

“The Amos Chapel is receiving much-needed upgrades, thanks to several donors,” said Nancy Hamilton, Ohio Living Dorothy Love director of gift planning. “\$32,000 was raised to repair windows, install new window treatments and replace the flooring with new carpeting. We’ve also installed new sound and camera systems and repaired the piano.”

Several gifts to support these enhancements were anonymous, but one notable gift came from the family of the late Ross Moore, Jr. Interestingly, Ross’s wife, Aunalee, spent 20 years working at Ohio Living Dorothy Love in human resources, before retiring and moving into the community’s independent living residences. Ross and Aunalee’s daughter, Richlynn, has continued the family’s legacy of involvement as a volunteer.

“My mother and father have had lifelong relationships with the people of Ohio Living Dorothy Love,” noted Richlynn Moore. “When my mother heard of this need, she knew it would be a great way to count our blessings and share them.”

Plans for a 20th anniversary celebration in the space were cancelled because of the pandemic, but spiritual life programming hasn’t skipped a beat.

“Throughout 2020 and 2021, we’ve been able to host services, bible studies, devotions and even ‘Name That Hymn,’ as a result of the refurbishments,” explained Chaplain Jane Madden. “The new equipment was installed in February 2020, just a month before things were shut down due to the pandemic. This was entirely God’s timing, so our residents would be able to view and participate in spiritual life activities.”

“Also, in replacing the carpet, the spiritual life team focused on a different color in the center aisle, to lead people visually to the altar,” she continued. “The new blinds help to shut out interfering light, so our broadcast services can be seen more clearly. Truly, the whole space feels cleansed.”

Jane emphasized, “We desire to take care of what God has given us with the Amos Chapel. We need to steward it well, so we can pass it on to future generations.”



## CARING for our CAREGIVERS

## COVID Fund Enables Appreciation Gift for Home Health and Hospice Staff

The Ohio Living Home Health & Hospice team is committed to caring for clients and patients in whatever setting they call home, around the clock and in all kinds of weather. Practically speaking, their work requires travel to and from various

locations across the state of Ohio, and ever-changing environments.

In February 2021, a group of donors partnered with the Ohio Living Foundation to provide all-weather jackets for 330+ employees. The branded, heavy-duty jackets were an instant hit, and they arrived just in time for winter weather and cooler temperatures.

“This meaningful gift came at a time when our team members needed it most,” said Wendy Price Kiser, division executive, Ohio Living Home Health & Hospice. “We can always count on our Foundation and donors to help us support, appreciate and value our teams!”



Special thanks to our incredible staff and the generous individuals who contributed nearly \$18,000 to this appreciation effort.



## Akron North DECA Students Present Grant to Ohio Living Rockynol

Ohio Living Rockynol recently welcomed a \$1,500 grant from a group of Akron North High School students supported by a national philanthropy organization.

Representatives of Akron North DECA Youth Philanthropy Group presented the funds with the support of Magnified Giving, a national initiative that provides \$1,000 grants and programs to teach students about philanthropy. The students raised the additional \$500 through the school’s enterprise store.

“During the pandemic, our elderly neighbors in the Akron community have had many challenges. I am thrilled that my students have a high regard for the elderly and desire to be attentive to their needs,” said Eric Mathews, North High entrepreneurship and marketing instructor and DECA advisor.

“Ohio Living Rockynol is a wonderful place that puts the elderly Akron community first,” said Mikayla Perryman, a senior at Akron North and president of the North High DECA chapter.

“We are so thankful to have been selected by the students for this



Mikayla Perryman and Elijah Humphrey, both seniors at Akron North and members of its DECA chapter, present Ohio Living Rockynol with a \$1,500 grant.

grant and to be a part of a program that teaches youth about the importance of philanthropy,” said Nancy Hamilton, director of gift planning at Ohio Living Rockynol. “This grant will help support educational activities for the residents of Ohio Living Rockynol.”



# Educational Assistance Program Contributes to Employee Growth and Development

Ohio Living providing the help students need

Ohio Living invests in employee growth and development through its Educational Assistance Program which helps eligible employees pursuing long-term care industry-related degrees. Since 2020, 70 employees have used the Educational Assistance Fund.

The program provides financial assistance for a variety of learning and professional development opportunities along with related expenses.



Ricci Baily is a nursing unit manager at Ohio Living Mount Pleasant in Monroe

“Without Ohio Living’s assistance and an incentive to go back to school, I would not have the job I have today,” said Ricci Bailey, a nursing unit manager at Ohio Living Mount Pleasant who started her career in 2008 as a Resident Assistant. “I started out on an entirely different career path, and I’m grateful for the opportunities that continued education has provided for me. From Resident Assistant, to State Tested Nursing Assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse, team lead, and now – unit manager; it’s been quite the journey.”

The benefits of the program are far-reaching, from personal development to career advancement, and even enrichment of offerings for residents.

*“Without Ohio Living’s assistance and an incentive to go back to school, I would not have the job I have today.”  
- Ricci Bailey*

“I’ve directly applied learnings from my undergraduate studies to my work,” said Samantha Beetler, an activities assistant at Ohio Living Rockynol. “I recently graduated with a bachelor’s degree in public health from Kent State University. It’s inspired me to really prioritize both mental and physical health with the activities I plan and coordinate for our residents. I’ve even started a few new offerings, like guided meditation in the garden and a gardening club.”



Samantha Beetler is an activities assistant at Ohio Living Rockynol in Akron.

Up to \$3,000 per fiscal year is available to full-time employees pursuing certain undergraduate or nursing degrees, up to \$1,500 per fiscal year to part-time employees pursuing certain undergraduate degrees, up to \$2,000 per fiscal year to part-time employees pursuing nursing degrees, and up to \$4,000 per fiscal year with a total of \$8,000 maximum benefit to full-time employees pursuing a master’s degree in a long-term care job-related field.

Additionally, financial assistance is provided for class expenses and materials or books to those employees who pursue courses that result in certification.

“I’ve benefited immensely from the educational reimbursement program,” said Matt Warling, a Cook II at Ohio Living Westminster-Thurber. “My career started here in 2009 as a dishwasher, and the chance to go back to school, essentially cost-free, opened new paths for a culinary career. I’ve received great training and new skills, and over the years, my co-workers have become like family.”

“A lot of people chose the restaurant path when they went to culinary school,” Warling continued.



Matt Warling is a Cook II at Ohio Living Westminster-Thurber in Columbus

“I feel blessed by God to be working in a healthcare kitchen. When the pandemic hit, we stayed open – I had a job. And beyond that, every day, I get to provide healthy, high-quality and safe dining experiences for some of the wisest and kindest older adults I know. I work in an open kitchen, so I can see their reactions. They’re worth coming to work for!”

Ohio Living is committed to employee advancement and proudly welcomes donor contributions to its Educational Assistance Fund to support employees aspiring to continue their education.

# In the Works At Our Communities

- The Shaeffer Schweitzer kitchen and dining room at **Ohio Living Breckenridge Village** will be remodeled early next year.
- The **Ohio Living Cape May** courtyard will be complete by the end of August. A tentative grand opening has been set for late summer.
- The Reynolds Family Nature Trail is in its third and final phase at **Ohio Living Swan Creek**. The trail was funded by resident Charles “Chuck” Reynolds and should be completed in early September.
- Cynthia’s Garden is under construction at **Ohio Living Westminster-Thurber**. This is a patio and garden space for Healthcare residents to use. It was created in memory of Cynthia White and funded by her husband Terry White and their daughters. Expected to be completed by end of August. 🌱

## 2021 GREAT PLACE TO WORK



## FOUR YEARS IN A ROW!



## Ohio Living Earns Great Place to Work™ Recertification for 2021

Ohio Living has achieved Great Place to Work™ recertification for the fourth consecutive year from Great Place to Work®, the global authority on workplace culture.

The annual certification process consists of externally conducted employee surveys that focus on policies, organizational structure, employee engagement and other workplace experiences.

Our employees are at the heart of all we do, and we celebrate our cumulative success with this honor.

## Ohio Living Gift Planners

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Serving: Ohio Living Breckenridge Village

### We’ve Moved!

See our new mailing address - we ask that you toss any donation envelope with our old address and use the new envelope provided to ensure your donation makes its way to us!



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