

Words From the WOODS

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FROM POMPERAUG WOODS

WINTER 2025



There's a wonderful energy that comes with a new year. It's a chance to start with a clean slate, make plans, and look forward with excitement to all the good that is set to unfold in the coming months. Here at Pomperaug Woods, we infuse everyday with that "New Year" excitement as we make it a daily habit to embrace what's new and wonderful in our lives — new friends, new hobbies, and new interests. We hope everyone keeps that "New Year" optimism in their heart and embraces every opportunity to make a new friend or try a new hobby. It'll keep you young at heart. Happy New Year everyone!

Warmly, **Vicki Gyba-Marshall**, *Executive Director*

Residents Get Walking With the Community-Wide Turkey Trot Challenge!

To inspire the entire Pomperaug Woods community to walk their way to better health, Wellness Coordinator Megan Boyd kicked off a new tradition — a Turkey Trot Challenge. "When you live at Pomperaug Woods, you walk more than you realize," said Megan. "So, I thought we'd track walking for the Turkey Trot. Everyone is able to participate by logging distance at their own pace. Some will accomplish a mile in a day. Others will cumulate a mile in short walks over several days' time. Positive motivation like the Turkey Trot helps turn daily walking into a habit. We all win when we exercise! Our 18 participants logged a total of 294 miles. That's the distance of walking from Pomperaug Woods to Augusta, Maine. Our residents are AMAZING!"

Every participant who signed up for the Turkey Trot received a free pedometer as well as a pair of silly turkey socks. Residents kept track of their steps/miles and earned a turkey sticker on their walking chart for every mile logged. Resident Sam Burd exercises daily, but the Turkey Trot got him more interested in adding walking

to his daily exercise regimen. "Now that I'm tracking my distance for the Turkey Trot, I find I'm enjoying taking another lap or two around the community. It keeps my joints fluid and flexible and gets the blood flowing. So important!"

At age 89, resident Santosh Joshi rose to the challenge. "Now I walk on the CrossTrainer every day," said Santosh. "I logged 20 miles for the Turkey Trot. My family is so proud of me."

This year's Grand Prize Winner of a new pair of sneakers, Jackie Gerbo, logged 69 miles over the 10-day event. "I'm 93 years old, and I walk 90-minutes a day, 6 days a week," said Jackie. "I walk outside in good weather, and inside in bad weather. It keeps me feeling young."



Turkey Trot Challenge Winner: Jackie Gerbo



Just TWO Putnam Apartments Left!

Start the New Year right by “right-sizing” into a Putnam apartment at Pomperaug Woods! There are only two cozy 1 bed/1 bath Putnam floor plans left on the second floor, offering panoramic views of the Connecticut countryside.

New Year Savings! Make a deposit on a select second floor Putnam floor plan apartment by March 31st, and you’ll be awarded a one-time incentive of **\$30,000 off Entrance Fees.**

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* Incentive applicable on select second floor Putnam style floor plans only. Must make a deposit by March 31, 2025. 80% Return of Capital Agreements only.

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The Noteworthy A Cappella Concert Gets Rave Reviews!

The residents of Pomperaug Woods enjoyed a holiday treat when the Noteworthy A Cappella ensemble held a private concert on our campus.



Noteworthy has more than a dozen members of both professional and hobbyist singers ranging from 20 to 80+ years old. “Noteworthy was founded five years ago by our director, Joyce Flanagan,” said group tenor, Daria Verelley. “She recently passed away, so we wanted to host some local concerts in her honor to get everyone in the holiday spirit. Pomperaug Woods is a gem of a community, and it was our honor to perform here.”

Resident Marcia Strittmatter thoroughly enjoyed the concert. “It was a delight,” she said. “We rang jingle bells as we sang along to carols. It put everyone in the holiday spirit.”

“It was standing room only,” said resident Jean Burnham. “The Garden Room was packed! It was a very good concert. I quite enjoyed it.”

Resident Jean Berechid loved the energy. “It felt like a group of neighbors came caroling,” said Jean. “It perfectly captured the holiday spirit.”

“This concert had a certain glow to it,” said resident Lois Ruskin. “The reception after the concert was lovely, and such a wonderful way to wrap up a festive afternoon.”

Check the Activities Calendar for the day/time of the next concert at Pomperaug Woods.

Chef Shannon Uses Her Grandmother's Recipes to Create Magical Soups

There's nothing like a warm bowl of soup to chase away the winter chill. The lucky residents at Pomperaug Woods are regularly treated to a smorgasbord of the most delectable soups, all courtesy of Chef Shannon and her grandmother's recipe box.

Resident Thelma Oppenheimer is part of the Food Committee and has nothing but praise for Chef Shannon. "Everyone LOVES Shannon's soups," said Thelma. "She has the most innovative ideas, and the variety is tremendous — she has over 35 soups in her repertoire, and each one is more delicious than the last. The Pea Soup is everyone's favorite, but there's also Corn Chowder, Potato Leek, Harvest Vegetable, Herb Fennel, Spring Minestrone, Sante Fe Chicken...the list goes on and on. She is so talented and is just the warmest person. We are so lucky to have her here."



Chef Shannon making Tomato Cheddar Soup

"I have never eaten so much soup in my life," laughed resident Sandy Milkes. "You can taste the love that goes into Shannon's soups. She always adds a special touch to them. They make Pomperaug Woods feel like a very warm, homey place. The Beef Barley is spectacular. YUM!"

Resident Peggy Gloria is always impressed by Chef Shannon. "She is so proud to use her grandmother's recipes," said Peggy. "Her Tomato Cheddar soup is my favorite. There's nothing like homemade soup to bring people together. These recipes are the thread of love from her grandmother to Shannon to us. Every bowl makes me feel all warm and cozy."

A WOOLY Tale — Residents Enjoy a Lecture on the History of Maritime Knitwear

As chilly winter weather creeps in, what better way to warm the heart than to listen to a fascinating lecture on the history of Maritime Knitwear by Rebecca Bayreuther Donohue.



"I worked at a maritime museum for over 20 years," said Rebecca. "My lecture 'Knit So As To Turn Water: The History of New England's Maritime Knitting', connects the traditions of maritime workers through the shared culture of knitwear. This lecture is a whirlwind tour of maritime knitwear from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629 through the World War II knitting craze, and up to today's Seaman's Church Institute that creates and distributes knitwear to sailors currently working up and down the Atlantic seaboard. People who make a living working on the ocean need knitwear that can help them survive the elements and still be productive. We take a peek at the fascinating history of maritime mittens, hats, and sweaters, and see how the knitwear has changed over time to adapt to the changing maritime jobs. When I walked into the lobby here at Pomperaug Woods, I was welcomed with a piece of art that is a tree covered in hand-knitted leaves. And the AMAZING knitted Winter scene on display where I lectured was such a beautiful piece of knitted creativity. This is a community who appreciates the needle arts, and it is a true pleasure to lecture here."

Resident Peggy Gloria was so impressed with the maritime knitwear lecture. "Rebecca made it into such an exciting story with all the photographs and the wonderful examples of the knitwear utilized throughout history," said Peggy. "I never stop learning here at Pomperaug Woods."

Check the Activities Calendar for dates/times of upcoming lectures.

Resident Spotlight: Joe & Joan Regan

Joe & Joan Regan feel a special connection with Pomperaug Woods. "Our children and grandchildren feel so comfortable here that this is where we celebrate our family Christmas together," said Joan. "We have a large extended family, with four children and seven grandchildren. The whole family gathers here at Pomperaug Woods the Saturday before Christmas. We all pile into the Garden Room, and put our family presents under the huge Christmas tree. We order our Christmas dinner from the dining room, and the dining staff takes care of everything — set up, table service, clean up. Pomperaug Woods feels like home to ALL of us!"



Joe and Joan moved to Pomperaug Woods when they were in their early 70's. "That made all the difference," said Joe. "Pomperaug Woods offers so many wonderful activities, and we've been able to enjoy all of them over the years. No matter what your hobbies, they have it all here. There's a bocce court, a putting green, walking trails, and a fitness center. I play pool and poker with the guys every week."

"And I love playing mahjonn," said Joan. "We didn't know a soul when we moved here, but we have met the most wonderful friends. Our group eats dinner together in the dining room every week. We'll even meet for cocktails before dinner in each other's apartments. All of the residents are friendly, and the staff is just wonderful. You couldn't find a more supportive, welcoming community. Of course, the lectures, trips, concerts, and classes are all terrific, but it's the people that make you happy to live here."

We're so lucky you chose Pomperaug Woods, Joe & Joan. Your family is a BIG part of our community family.



**At Pomperaug Woods...
We found a Place Like Home,
Only Better.**



Everything we need is here, including a beautiful Garden Room, complete with a Christmas tree to celebrate our family holidays and dinners. What a nice perk!

Learn How to Watch an AKC Dog Show from Long-Time Judge, **May Bernhard**



May Bernhard (far left) judging a dog show

Pomperaug Woods' own May Bernhard is a widely respected dog show judge. "I spent over 30 years judging working breed dogs," said May. "I hope this lecture helps those watching an AKC dog show on TV understand the details, so they'll get more out of the experience. What's important to know is that dogs are not judged against each other. They are judged against a standard for the breed. A judge is looking at a dog's build and the movement, as well as assessing the dog's attitude and showmanship. Fascinating."

Resident Thelma Oppenheimer has attended many dogs shows with May over the years. "It takes a lot of work to be a judge," said Thelma. "You really have to study. May has an amazing eye for what makes a winning dog, no matter what the breed."

"May showed us the proper way to approach a dog, and she demonstrated the actions of how a dog's legs move depending on whether it's a small or large breed," said resident Charlotte Evans. "May is so knowledgeable."

Residents Sam and Lynda Burd said May's lecture inspired them to watch the AKC National Dog show right after the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. "We discovered that the competition is a 2-day event where over 2,000 dogs compete," said Sam. "May taught us what to watch for in different breeds and categories. We'll definitely be tuning into the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show next. Thanks for a great lecture, May!"

Check the Activities Calendar for the day/time of more interesting speaker engagements.

Pomperaug Woods is a **Pet-FRIENDLY** Community!

Pomperaug Woods is proud to be a pet-friendly community, and our many four-legged residents are happy with all the extra attention they get here.

"I adopted my Portuguese Water Dog, Loretta, during the pandemic," said resident Kate Jackson. "Everyone here is so kind to her, and she's adjusted well to apartment living."

Resident Janet Hansen came to Pomperaug Woods with a dog and has since adopted two senior cats. "Pets are wonderful companions," she said. "They bring joy to my life."

"I've always had cats. They're very special to me," said resident Sally Bourgault. "My cat, Cali, took to Pomperaug Woods as though she lived here all her life. So content."

Resident May Bernhard adopted her 12-year-old Siamese cat, Dusty, from Whiskers Cat Rescue. "Whiskers is a wonderful organization," said May. "If you're a senior and you adopt a senior cat, they cover all expenses of pet ownership. They pay for all the food and litter, and they cover all vet bills. Whiskers makes it so easy to have a loving pet in your life. There are five residents here who have adopted a cat through Whiskers."

We're so happy to have these and many other cats and dogs as part of the Pomperaug Woods family. Woof! Meow!



Kate Jackson with Loretta



Janet Hansen with Eddie

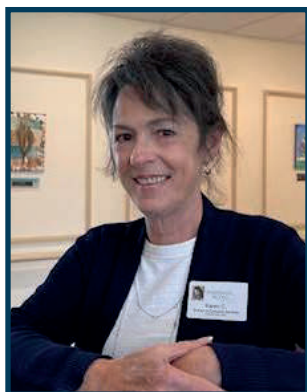


Sally Bourgault with Cali



May Bernhard with Dusty

Meet Our Team Member: **Karen Capone**



Karen Capone found herself a second career at Pomperaug Woods. "I was in Project Management and Process Reengineering with Pitney Bowes for 37 years," said Karen. "I retired in 2021, and took some time to focus on my health, resulting in getting a liver and kidney transplant in 2023. A part-time position in reception at Pomperaug Woods fell into my lap, and I loved it from the minute I started here. I enjoy this community so much that when I was offered the role of Director of Executive Services, I couldn't say no."

Karen is overwhelmed with the kindness of people at Pomperaug Woods. "I feel so lucky to have found Pomperaug Woods," said Karen. "The staff and residents here enrich my life, and I've become invested in their lives, as well. I grew up in Newtown, and I frequently discover that I went to school with a resident's child or knew their child through Scouting. It's really a small world."

As Director of Executive Services, Karen is a Jack-of-all-trades. "I manage Reception, the Administrative Offices, Housekeeping, and Laundry, while ensuring the needs of our residents are met," said Karen. "When I started here, I read, 'The residents don't live in our workplace. We work in their home.' It is our responsibility to make every day the best possible experience for them. Living and working together, we become a family."

When Karen isn't working, she enjoys hiking and volunteering with the Boy Scouts and her local Food Bank. "I love spending time outdoors," said Karen. "The new walking trails around the Pomperaug Woods campus are just one more reason why I love it here. It's beautiful!"

Pomperaug Woods' Book Club Thanks **Newtown Library** for their Support

The record-breaking August 2024 rainstorm triggered massive flash flooding in Southbury. Among the hardest hit in the area was the Southbury Public Library, which suffered devastating damage and is now closed indefinitely. The town library supported many book clubs in the area, including the Pomperaug Woods "Gathering of Readers" book club. Fortunately, when disaster strikes, good people come together to help, and Newtown's CH Booth Library stepped in to supply books to the Pomperaug Woods book club as well as to 30+ other local book clubs. Recently, Pomperaug Woods book club members stopped by to thank the Newtown Library staff for their unwavering support.

"A public library is the heart of a town," said resident Peggy Jett. "The Pomperaug Woods book club is so grateful to the Newtown Library for stepping up to support dozens of book clubs and hundreds of readers. They are amazing!"

"The Pomperaug Woods book club has almost 20 members, and we read 12 books a year," said resident Kate Jackson.

"The Newtown Library saves each member of our group hundreds of dollars by loaning us books instead of having us buy them. WOW!"

"This is a wonderful example of neighbors helping neighbors," said resident Muffy Barhydt. "Not only does Newtown gather all the copies of the book we need from libraries within the consortium, but one of the Newtown employees drops off the case of books each month to Pomperaug Woods. We are so grateful! Thank you, Newtown Library, for everything! I look forward to enjoying your beautiful library in the future."



L to R: Cathy Filiato, Jennifer Nash, Jon Barker, Peggy Jett, Kate Jackson, Muffy Barhydt

Pomperaug Woods Congratulates Our Most Recent **Employees of the Month!**

Pomperaug Woods is so proud of the wonderful staff, each of whom makes such an important contribution to the quality of our community. "To spotlight exceptional employees, residents or employees can write a 'Shoot-for-the-Stars' letter, detailing an individual's exceptional dedication to our community," said Liz Sheehan, Director of Human Resources. "We take those letters very seriously and use them to nominate and select our Employee of the Month."

Meet this quarter's three Employees of the Month:

OCTOBER: Gregory Sabol *Housekeeping Team*

Greg joined Pomperaug Woods in January 2022 as a housekeeper in the Health Center. He brings a sense of warmth and care to our residents and often pulls out a guitar to entertain them.



NOVEMBER: Elaine Ramos *Health Center Care Team*

Elaine joined Pomperaug Woods in August 2012. As a caregiver, Elaine has an incredible gift for making residents feel heard, valued, and respected. Her skill and compassion transform lives.



DECEMBER: Julie Horelick *Dining Services Team*

Julie joined Pomperaug Woods in September 2023. Her attention to detail, her calm under pressure, and her genuine care for residents makes every dining experience special.



We thank our Employees of the Month for going above and beyond to make Pomperaug Woods such a special place to live and work!



Pomperaug Woods Board Member Spotlight: **Christine Edelson**

Christine Edelson has moved 17 times in her adult life, but she is pleased to have lived the last 20 years in Southbury, Connecticut. Her work as a local business owner gave her deep connections with many in the area, and it was her friendly, outgoing personality that made her such a catch for the Pomperaug Woods Board of Directors. "I'm a people person," said Christine. "I am the board member that is the bridge between the Board and the residents. Each month I host an open discussion group with residents. Residents share their suggestions, their worries, their insights, and their complaints with me. I want to hear it all. I'm a problem solver. The residents are the heartbeat of Pomperaug Woods."

Christine participates in as many Pomperaug Woods activities as she can to build a genuine connection with residents. "I did the Alzheimer's Walk in September, and I went to the tree lighting in December," said Christine. "I go to most Friday happy hours. I also work closely with the Resident Council. I want residents to know me and trust me. I want them to be comfortable speaking candidly with me. The success of this community is how warm and inviting it is, and I want my representation of the Board to convey that warmth as well. That warmth is also reflected in how much the staff cares about residents. The Pomperaug Woods staff is one-of-a-kind...so respectful, so knowledgeable, and so dedicated to making sure every resident feels valued and supported. Pomperaug Woods is a gem, and it is my privilege to be on the Board of Directors. The next time my husband and I move, it will be to Pomperaug Woods."

Thank you for being a listening ear, Christine. You really know how to bring people together.

Pomperaug Woods Artists Celebrate a Year of Creativity at a Brunch

Pomperaug Woods is unique in so many ways, but particularly in the way the arts are infused into activities, entertainment, and even the décor of the community. Lisa Huebenthal, Director of Community Life, is an artist herself. "I teach the Creative Arts class," said Lisa. "Many of the projects I hang as artwork throughout the halls. It brings this beautiful energy to the building. Everywhere you look, there is joyful art."

The art the residents/artists create doesn't just hang on the walls. "We recently made snowman sculptures that were used as the centerpieces in the dining room," said resident Nancy Desmond. "At Pomperaug Woods, you enjoy art where you least expect it."

"I loved working on the caroler sculptures that decorated the Garden Room," said resident Ellie Crystal. "They really captured the joy that we all feel making art."

"My favorite project was 'Copying a Master'," said resident Beverly Robertson. "I painted a Matisse. Lisa hung our paintings along with photos of the original masterworks. The hallway blossomed into this really beautiful tribute to the masters."

"In creating art, it's surprising what you discover about yourself," said resident Marilyn Simon.

Lisa Huebenthal recently held a brunch for the Creative Arts participants to celebrate all the artwork they have created over the year. "They deserve thanks for all the beauty they bring to the community," said Lisa. "Surrounding yourself with art is good for the soul."



Thank You Creative Arts