



The sun is out, spirits are high, and our community is buzzing with summer fun. Whether we're applauding our talented Pomperaug Players, diving into lively Author Talks, or hitting the road for art museum adventures, at Pomperaug Woods, summer isn't just a season — it's a celebration! Connection and camaraderie are always in season here, and that's what makes summer shine at Pomperaug Woods. And just wait — plans for fall fun are already in the works...

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

## Pomperaug Woods Celebrates Top Honors in Memory Care

Pomperaug Woods is proud to announce two major achievements in our Memory Care neighborhood.

For the fourth year in a row, Pomperaug Woods has earned the Gold Award for Heartfelt Connections - A Memory Care Program™. This national recognition honors communities that provide exceptional, person-centered care for individuals living with Alzheimer's and Dementia. Our Heartfelt Connections program celebrates each resident's unique story and focuses on what they can still accomplish - offering daily moments of purpose, connection, and joy.

"We're so proud to receive the Gold Award again in 2025," said Vicki Gyba-Marshall, Pomperaug Woods Executive Director. "Every day our team exceeds expectations with their compassion and dedication."

Further underscoring Pomperaug Woods' commitment to Memory Care excellence is the recognition of Debby Crutchfield, our Memory Care Enrichment Coordinator. She received the 2025 CALA Outstanding Employee Accomplishment Award, presented by the Connecticut Assisted Living Association to those who demonstrate exceptional service, leadership, and advocacy.



Debby Crutchfield

"Debby brings warmth, insight, and creativity to every interaction, making each resident feel valued and engaged," said Vicki. "Her compassion is heartfelt — it truly defines her. The families of our Memory Care residents feel a real bond with her, knowing that their family members have a rich life here at Pomperaug Woods through Debby's efforts."

"I love my job, the team members I work with, and the families that support our efforts," said Debby. "But most of all I love the residents. I want to thank Vicki Gyba-Marshall and Kate Petersen, my supervisor, for the nomination. It was a wonderful surprise and a great honor to receive this award. Pomperaug Woods is a wonderful place to work."

With award-winning programs and dedicated team members like Debby, Pomperaug Woods continues to raise the bar for memory care.



Kate Petersen (Dir of Resident Health Services),  
Debby Crutchfield (Memory Care Enrichment Coordinator),  
and Vicki Gyba-Marshall (Executive Director).

# Just 1 Putnam Apartment Left!

Pomperaug Woods offers residents the choice of ten different floor plans. The cozy 1 bed/1 bath Putnam apartment home is a resident favorite.

"The Putnam is wonderful," said resident Kate Jackson. "The layout is well-thought out. I appreciate the convenience of my own washer and dryer in my apartment. It's perfect!"



## Why choose Pomperaug Woods?

- Gourmet Dining
- 5-Star Services & Amenities
- Friendly Residents & Staff
- LifeCare Peace-of-Mind



**In-Person and Virtual Tours Available!**  
**Schedule a visit TODAY: 203-935-3734**

## Every Step a Story: An Author Talk with Dutch Barhydt

Residents were treated to an inspiring afternoon as author Dutch Barhydt visited Pomperaug Woods to discuss his book, *Walking Through Life: 35 Short Stories*. In conversation with the always-insightful moderator, Charlotte Evans, the event drew a full house as Dutch shared stories from decades spent outdoors, the joy to be found in walking, and his mission beyond the book. "After sixty years of hiking all over the world, I realized that every trail taught me something, and those lessons were worth sharing," Dutch said. "I hope this book encourages people of all ages to get outside and experience the joy, the beauty, and the peace that spending time in nature brings. All proceeds from this book go to The Wilderness Skills Fund, providing financial support to high school and college students looking to have their own adventure in an overnight wilderness program. I want to thank the folks at Pomperaug Woods for their interest. They were warm, supportive, and genuinely curious. The questions during the Q&A were sharp and thoughtful. I hope everyone left feeling energized by the conversation."

"I loved the book," said resident Peggy Gloria. "It was wonderful. I think about its lessons whenever I walk now. Every flower and tree you see tells a story if you keep your eyes open."

"Dutch was a very compelling speaker," said resident Kay Marcoux. "His story was so personal, but he made it easy to find connections within my own life."



Charlotte Evans interviews Dutch Barhydt

***Walking Through Life: 35 Short Stories* is available to borrow from the Pomperaug Woods library, or for purchase on Amazon. To learn more about The Wilderness Skills Fund, go to [www.wildernessskillsfund.com](http://www.wildernessskillsfund.com).**





# Shakespeare's Queens is a Hit with Residents

Pomperaug Woods was delighted to welcome back actress and playwright Poornima Kirby, this time with her original solo show, *Shakespeare's Queens*. The play unfolds as a witty, heartfelt debate between William Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth I, exploring themes of power, leadership, and womanhood. Through 16 excerpts from Shakespeare's plays, Kirby contrasted the Bard's role as a writer and observer of power with Elizabeth's lived experience as a ruler, bringing to life iconic Shakespearian characters from Lady Macbeth to Queen Margaret. "Pomperaug Woods residents are so attentive and responsive," said Poornima. "And they asked very thoughtful questions in the Q&A. It's always a joy to perform here!"

The auditorium was packed, and the performance drew enthusiastic praise.

"We gave her a standing ovation," said resident Lynda Burd. "Poornima is an extraordinary actress and writer. It was an excellent show!"

"Just magnificent!" said resident Peggy Gloria. "Her knowledge of Shakespeare is exceptional."

"The feminist perspective was very compelling," said resident Fran Leili. "The show was cleverly written and beautifully staged."

*Shakespeare's Queens* delivered an afternoon of history, humor, and unforgettable theater.



L to R: May Bernhard, Poornima Kirby, and Peggy Gloria

**Check the Activities Calendar for dates/times of upcoming entertainment events.**

## Resident Gives Inspiring Lecture on Unsung WWII Hero: **Varian Fry**

Resident Rita Frost recently gave a lecture sharing the remarkable story of Varian Fry, an American hero whose bravery helped save more than 2,000 of the 20th Century's most important artists, intellectuals, writers, and scientists from Nazi persecution - including Marc Chagall and Max Ernst. Fry, a non-Jew, was just 32 years old when he volunteered to go to Marseille in 1940 through the Emergency Rescue Committee. Tasked with rescuing 200 refugees, Fry stayed for 13 months and orchestrated escape for thousands. He was this country's Oscar Schindler.



Varian Fry

"Fry believed deeply in man's humanity to man," said Rita. "He disguised refugees as vineyard workers and created escape routes for them over the Pyrenees. Fry received little recognition during his lifetime. In more recent years he has received the *Croix de Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* from France, the *Eisenhower Liberation Medal*, and in 1996 he received the distinction of being the first American named 'Righteous Among the Nations' by Yad Vashem."

"The lecture was fantastic," said resident Sam Burd. "I had never heard of Fry before - now I'll never forget him. Rita really brought his story to life."

"Fry accomplished so much," said resident Glenn Anderson. "Everyone was captivated by this story."

"Rita's lecture introduced us to an amazing man that we might never have known about," said resident Marcia Strittmatter. "It was a very powerful and meaningful program."

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

# Resident Spotlight: Muffy Barhydt

Muffy Barhydt loves the outdoors. "I grew up in Maine, and spent my adult life in Connecticut," said Muffy. "There's nothing like the gorgeous green countryside of New England. When I decided to move to a senior living community, I knew I wanted a campus where I felt close to nature, and I wanted an apartment that faced the West, for beautiful sunsets. I was also hoping for lots of windows to be able to see expansive green lawns and lots of trees. Pomperaug Woods is the perfect community that has unspoiled natural beauty but also has walking trails so I can easily spend time outdoors. Beautiful surroundings make for a beautiful life."



**The Barhydt Family — Dutch Barhydt, Whit Ryan, Muffy Barhydt, Caroline Francis, and Peter Barhydt.**

Muffy and her husband, Dirck, lived in Middlebury for 33 years, where they raised their four children. When they decided to downsize, they chose a condo in Watertown. "My husband and I were married for 40 years before his death," said Muffy. "I continued to live in the condo by myself for 28 years. On my 90th birthday, my daughter said to me, 'So Mom, do you have any plans?' It was just the nudge that I needed. I knew I didn't want to continue living alone in the condo or having aides care for me as I grew older. My son took me to tour four different senior living communities. I knew Pomperaug Woods was the place for me. There was absolutely no comparison. The community is beautiful. The food is very good. The people are friendly, and the care is exceptional. No other community even came close."

The apartment Muffy chose had a special amenity that brings her joy. "I have a 1 bed/1 bath apartment on the first floor," said Muffy. "My patio has an awning, and I am so appreciative of that. I can spend time outside three seasons of the year. It's my own private retreat."

While Muffy was confident Pomperaug Woods was the best choice for her, there were three things that surprised her about her new community. "Well, first, I was really impressed with all the activities here," said Muffy. "I love being part of the Book Club, and I thoroughly enjoy playing Bridge with various groups. I also really look forward to the Current Events discussion group each week, and the lectures and concerts are always wonderful. I was also surprised that living here has led me to develop new interests. The Wellness Coordinator, Megan Boyd, has a superb exercise program, and I now go to Chair Exercise three times a week. It's terrific! And the loveliest surprise of all was that I've made new friends here. Who can believe that at almost 92 years old I'd be making new friends. It makes all the difference to be so connected with other residents."

Muffy's four children, nine grandchildren, and six great grandsons are all ecstatic she chose Pomperaug Woods. "Moving to Pomperaug Woods is the gift I gave my children," said Muffy. "And with the new friends I've made, it turned out to be a gift I gave myself. My kids never have to worry about me. They see how happy I am here. They love to visit me and eat lunch in the Café. Chef Shannon's soups are the best, and my son is crazy about her omelets. Time flies by for me, and the days pass happily. I'm so glad I chose Pomperaug Woods."

Welcome to the Pomperaug Woods family, Muffy. You are a wonderful addition!



# The Pomperaug Players Bring Down the House with Laughter

The Pomperaug Players lit up the stage with two hilarious one-act comedies that showcased the wit and heart of our very own resident thespians. In the first play, *The Curse of Bureaucracy*, a man's battle with the red tape of government phone lines turns divine - Will God send him to voicemail, too? The satire had the crowd roaring with laughter. The second play, *All the Comforts of Home*, followed the story of three women searching for a new roommate to help share expenses. They finally choose a charming gentleman - who turns out to be a counterfeiter!



The Pomperaug Players Cast

Resident May Bernhard founded the Pomperaug Players troupe. "Everyone did a wonderful job, and it was a pleasure to have Maureen Denver from the Woodbury Theater Group direct us," said May. "We're looking forward to performing our next play during the holiday season."

"Living at Pomperaug Woods is all about embracing new experiences," said resident Sam Burd. "My wife, Lynda, and I made our debut with the Pomperaug Players in this play. It was fun!"

"The camaraderie with the rest of the cast was wonderful," said resident Lynda Burd.

"I played the Voice of God and got a huge laugh," said resident Joel Abramson. "I enjoyed it!"

"This is my second performance with the Pomperaug Players," said resident Glenn Anderson. "It was a well-written play that was short and sweet, and this was another fun experience."

**Check the Activities Calendar for dates/times of the next Pomperaug Players performance.**

## Residents Dive into "The Alchemist" Exhibit at the Katonah Museum of Art



Obstruction, 2011

The Katonah Museum of Art is a favorite of Pomperaug Woods residents and the recent trip to experience the exhibit *Ali Banisadr: The Alchemist* was another rewarding visit.

"The Ali Banisadr exhibit featured large-scale, abstract paintings that blur the line between chaos and harmony," said Lisa Huebenthal, Director of Community Life. "Known for his explosive color

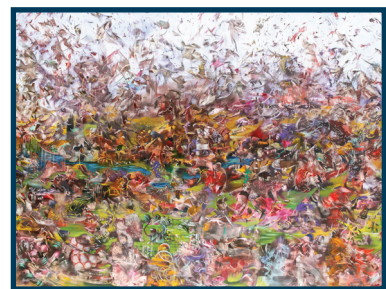
and dreamlike imagery, Banisadr's work combines history, mythology, and motion, creating a canvas layered with stories and symbolism. A docent gave us a private guided tour, and brought Banisadr's influences and intentions to life with

fascinating detail. I think we all left with a fresh perspective on contemporary art."

"The docent was excellent," said resident Peggy Gloria. "The painting truly came alive when she explained how to see all the smaller embedded images within the bigger piece of art. I came away feeling very uplifted."

"It was so interesting to view the paintings from a distance and then see how the paintings changed once you viewed them up close," said resident Peggy Jett. "The docent shared insights into the artist's themes and that made the paintings even more meaningful."

"His paintings were spectacular," said resident May Bernhard. "I'm not always a fan of abstract art, but his work is absolutely breathtaking. I thoroughly enjoyed the trip."



It's In The Air, 2012

**Check the Activities Calendar for dates/times of upcoming daytrips.**

# A Walking Trip to Bent of the River Audubon Center Celebrates Nature's Beauty

Pomperaug Woods residents recently took a peaceful and picturesque trip to the Bent of the River Audubon Center in Southbury — and it was a beautiful way to welcome summer.

After a quick stop at the outdoor bird balcony where they used binoculars for birdwatching, the group set out on a mile-long trail that followed the Pomperaug River. The path was lush, quiet, and bursting with life — bright flowers, an abundance of birds, and the first butterflies of the season made appearances, thanks to the many birdhouses nestled throughout the grounds.



"It was the perfect mix of movement and mindfulness," said Megan Boyd, Wellness Coordinator at Pomperaug Woods. "I loved seeing the sparkle of dew still clinging to the plants."

"Walking along the river felt like a little getaway, far away from everyday life," said resident Karen Hasemann. "The expansive views were really beautiful."

"The walk took us through all kinds of terrain — woods, fields, riverbank, even a boardwalk over the marsh," said resident Gail Rahal. "A scenic walk at the Audubon is a treat."

"I love the sense of freedom on a hike," said resident Fran Leili. "I'm looking forward to the next walking trip."

**Check the Activities Calendar for dates/times of upcoming daytrips.**

## Step Up to the Challenge: Standing Exercise with Megan Boyd

If you're looking for a workout that gets results, try the Standing Exercise class led by Wellness Coordinator, Megan Boyd. Held three times a week in Wilson Hall, this 45-minute class is Pomperaug Woods' most challenging fitness offering.

"The first 20 minutes are done seated, helping participants warm up safely," said Megan. "The next 20 minutes bring everyone to standing, with strength training that targets balance, coordination, and total-body strength. Using light hand weights, resistance bands, and the chair for support, residents perform 'loaded movement' - a technique that builds strength by combining leg movements with upper body resistance. The final five minutes focuses on cooldown stretches, leaving everyone feeling stronger, more mobile, and energized. When this class began, we had just a handful of participants. Now we're averaging 20 or more. I'm so proud of everyone's progress!"

"Megan has this lovely energy," said resident Kay Marcoux. "I always go to Standing Exercise class twice a week and also do personal training with Megan once a week. She inspires me!"

Resident May Bernhard agrees. "I go to Megan's Standing Exercise class and her Cardio class. She makes exercise fun," said May. "I'm feeling stronger every day!"

"Megan is a treasure," said resident Lea Embree. "She explains each movement, and the benefit you gain from it. She educates as well as inspires."



Megan Boyd

**The Standing Exercise class meets Mondays at 9:00 AM, Tuesdays at 1:15 PM, and Fridays at 11:00 AM in Wilson Hall. Check the Activities Calendar to confirm the day/time.**

# 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:

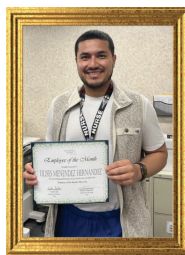
## **APRIL: Emily Soss** *Server, Culinary Services*

Emily joined Pomperaug Woods in September 2024. She brings so much heart to her role and truly makes a difference in the lives of our residents, serving delicious food with a smile.



## **MAY: Ulises Menendez Hernandez** *RN Supervisor, Health Center*

Ulises joined Pomperaug Woods in January 2025. As the overnight supervisor, his calm presence brings a sense of reassurance. He's a leader who leads by doing, not just directing.



## **JUNE: Kimberly Harris** *Scheduler, Health Center*

Kimberly joined Pomperaug Woods in December 1997 as a CNA, and over her 28 years here has grown into one of the most dependable, driven, and compassionate team members we have.



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: **Karen Schwarzchild**

Karen Schwarzchild joined the Pomperaug Woods Board of Trustees in January 2024, bringing her trademark warmth, dedication, and people-centered spirit to every interaction.

Karen is a longtime friend of board member, Christine Edelson. "I'm so glad Christine invited me to join the board," said Karen. "We're both passionate about this community."

Karen's 50 years as a physical therapist attest to her commitment to serving people. "Owning my own physical therapy practice has helped me understand the needs of a large health care centered-organization like Pomperaug Woods," said Karen. "I make it a priority to attend the Friday Night Cocktail Hour each week. It's a wonderful way to get to know residents and listen to their feedback. Their input is so important and helps guide the Board's many decisions."

Karen is also a familiar face at Pomperaug Woods holiday events, including the annual tree lighting. "Sharing these moments makes me feel so connected to this community," said Karen. "It's such a special place."

Karen has a deep admiration for the Pomperaug Woods team. "The staff here is incredible," said Karen. "And Vicki Gyba-Marshall does a phenomenal job as Executive Director. It's such a pleasure to contribute my time to Pomperaug Woods, and I'm excited for what's ahead."

We are so grateful for all you do for Pomperaug Woods, Karen. You are a big part of the warm and welcoming culture we value so much here.



## Residents Discover a Hidden Gem: Brush Hill Gardens

Residents embraced the summer weather and enjoyed a visit to Brush Hill Gardens. "Elsie McTiernan, a resident at Pomperaug Woods, is a close friend of Barbara and Charlie Robinson, the owners of Brush Hill Gardens. Elsie was instrumental in getting us an invitation," said Lisa Huebenthal, Director of Community Life. "The visit was just spectacular! It was riveting to see how the gardens have evolved over 40 years, beginning in 1971 when the Robinsons first acquired their 1750's clapboard farmhouse. They've put their heart and soul into their property, and the 10-acre landscape is so much more than just a garden. Charlie built a Waterworks with 14 pools and waterfalls! Our group explored the property and then gathered on the patio to eat our picnic lunch prepared by the Pomperaug Woods dining team. It was a beautiful day!"

"The house and grounds were absolutely magnificent," said resident Karen Hasemann. "And Barbara was such a charming hostess. I could chat with her all day."



"Charlie explained how he used excavating equipment to create a glacial rock formation he calls the 'Erratic Field,' reminiscent of Stonehenge," said resident Rita Kogstad. "He's an amazing artist!"

"Our gracious hosts generously donated two books to the Pomperaug Woods library," said resident Muffy Barhydt. *"Gardening, A Love Story: Creating Brush Hill,"* by Barbara Robinson and *Lake Waramaug Observed: A Celebration of One of the Most Enchanting Lakes in New England* by Charles Robinson. I'm looking forward to reading both! It was truly a memorable trip!"



L to R: Rita & Rolf Kogstad, Gail Rahal, Fran Leili, Lisa Huebenthal, Barbara Robinson, Julia Servadio, Tom & Karen Hasemann, Muffy Barhydt.



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