

suburbanlife

Residents of **Rydal Waters at Rydal Park** discover a welcoming community where they feel free to pursue their passions, make connections, and lead lives of purpose and engagement. page 62

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'LIVING HERE IS EASY'

Residents of **Rydal Waters** at **Rydal Park** discover a welcoming community where they feel free to pursue their passions, make connections, and lead lives of purpose and engagement.

Wendy Friedman spends her days and nights moving to the music, compelled by a love of dance that connects her with enthusiasts from around the globe. Robert W. Hansen brings empty canvases to life with bold swaths of paint, while his husband Gary Westerfer carves and creates in his woodshop. Siri Y. Hurst lives in harmony with the natural world and indulges her passion for the fine arts.

Each story is unique, yet all three intersect in a common location—Rydal Waters at Rydal Park, a Life Plan Community based in Abington Township, where each resident feels inspired to pursue his or her best life. Spread across 33 pristine acres, the community of 75 cottages offers first-class amenities and a maintenance-free lifestyle rooted in engagement, independence, and peace of mind.

“Living here is easy,” says Friedman. “Where I lived before, I didn’t feel like I was part of a community. Here, it is a community. People know each other.”



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Wendy Friedman
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MULTIPLE DANCE GROUPS
EVERY DAY, OFTEN
THROUGH ZOOM IN THE
COMFORT OF HER COTTAGE
AT RYDAL WATERS.

by **BILL DONAHUE** | photography by **NINA LEA PHOTOGRAPHY**

Friedman’s fellow residents know she has a passion for dance. She has a particular interest in Israeli folk dance, an inclusive term for the more than 8,000 uniquely choreographed dances that express Israel’s rich and far-reaching culture. Fluid, elegant, and expressive, Israeli folk dance incorporates various dance styles, including jazz and hip-hop, with influences from the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

While the pandemic has put a damper on travel, Friedman participates in multiple dance groups every day—most recently welcoming a dance group to the clubhouse at Rydal Waters for an afternoon of great in-person connection and dancing. She also often participates in the comfort of her cottage.

“The whole international community has come together through Zoom, so I’ll be dancing in Paris, London, and Buenos Aires with participants from around the world,” Friedman says. “I can start out the day dancing in Argentina, and at night I’ll be dancing in New York or Chicago. Most of the dances are two hours, but some go four to five hours. I could dance until all hours of the night.”

And she has. She recently participated in a 24-hour dance marathon organized by an Israeli dance group based in the Midwest.

Dance has long been part of Friedman’s life. She spent several decades teaching others as a fitness leader and dance instructor, but

she now sees herself as a student first and foremost. “I like continually learning,” she adds. “Being a student is a little more challenging because things change constantly.”

Friedman also loves languages, particularly Italian. Sometimes she gets to combine both passions—speaking Italian while doing international dance led by acclaimed dance instructors such as Roberto Bagnoli.

Friedman and her husband, David, moved into Rydal Waters earlier this year after more than 40 years living in a townhouse community in Upper Dublin. While her days have always been full and interesting, she suggests moving to Rydal Waters has only enriched her lifestyle.

“If you like any activity, it’s available to you here,” she says. “I also like the idea of being part of a community where we’re not anonymous. People talk about being isolated during the pandemic, but I feel connected. I’m still active in all the communities I belonged to [before the pandemic], and some even more so. I didn’t have to sacrifice anything by coming here. All I did was gain more. Some people call it downsizing; it’s expansive to me.”

‘A Diverse Community’

Bob Hansen and Gary Westerfer met 45 years ago at a New Year’s Eve party in Philadelphia. The rest, as they say, is history.

Now married and retired from their

careers in foreign affairs/intelligence analysis and information technology, respectively, Hansen and Westerfer have found new endeavors to ignite the imagination. Hansen paints striking works of abstract art, and Westerfer continues to do wood projects in his home workshop. They also share an interest in the outdoors, opera, orchestral

home of Reverend Theodore Pitcairn. Surrounded by the impressionists and other magnificent pieces, she developed an appreciation of art.

She later married Nishan Yardumian, a “deeply spiritual” artist who taught at the Academy of the New Church and Bryn Athyn College. Yardumian died at a young age.

After marrying Gerald Hurst, she began traveling the world, and has visited 42 countries so far. She also loves to teach, having spent more than two decades at the Academy of the New Church in Bryn Athyn. Today she volunteers as a docent at The Lord’s New Church in Huntingdon Valley. She chairs “a wonderful committee” devoted to cataloging and restoring the antiquities belonging to the estate of Theodore Pitcairn, the late theologian, philanthropist, and art collector whose family is synonymous with Bryn Athyn.

Before moving to Rydal Waters earlier this year, Hurst lived in “an extraordinary home” with her husband Gerald in a sylvan part of Huntingdon Valley. They called the home “Edenhurst” to reflect the area’s sanctuary-like remoteness and tranquility. Together the Hursts invested in renovations to make the home friendlier to the environment—bamboo flooring, sun tunnels to limit daytime electricity use, and geothermal heating and cooling, for example.

“We didn’t have children between the two of us, so that house was our baby,” Hurst says. “After his death, the house became too big for me.”

At Rydal Waters, she chose a home with an open space plan and a view of the greenery and a nearby stream. She also invested in several eco-friendly upgrades. For these



←
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music, and other aspects of Philadelphia’s vibrant arts-and-culture scene.

The couple will move to Rydal Waters later this year. They chose Rydal Waters because they believe the community will enable them to enjoy a higher standard of cultural and community life. Hansen likes the fact that they will have plenty of room for his art studio and Westerfer’s woodworking shop, and Westerfer appreciates the community’s distinctive architecture, serene landscape, and the interesting people they have met so far; he also values the proximity to public transportation for trips into Center City.

They also chose Rydal Waters because they feel as though they are joining a warm and increasingly diverse community.

“We have been received in the most welcoming way, and that was a big factor in closing the deal,” Hansen adds. “We hope we will be joined [at Rydal Waters] by other gay people. Racial diversity and variety are important to us, and we hope Rydal Waters will continue to build a diverse community in all respects.”

‘Do What You Love’

Siri Hurst spent her childhood in Durban, South Africa, and vacationed in the Drakensberg mountains, where she developed a love of wild animals and nature. After moving to the United States at age 12, she lived in the



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After his passing, she devoted her time to archiving his surviving works and organizing exhibitions of his catalog at revered institutions such as the Glencairn Museum. Recently she began curating a catalogue raisonné of Yardumian’s work, and has helped in promoting Philippe Smit, a Dutch-born artist who became a contemporary of Matisse and Monet in early 20th Century Paris.

reasons, she says Rydal Waters reminds her of her former address in Huntingdon Valley.

“It’s been a very positive experience,” she says. “I don’t have to care for a huge yard anymore. I don’t climb ladders anymore. If I need a light bulb changed, I can just email someone at Rydal Waters and they send someone right out. ... Living here really frees you to do what you love to do.” ■