

# suburbanlife



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# Golden Touch

Now celebrating its 50th anniversary, **Rydal Park & Waters** builds on its history as a destination for older adults who have an appetite for engagement, enrichment, and fulfillment.

by **Bill Donahue**  
photos by **Jody Robinson**

**W**hile they may be very different at first glance, Carol Nehring and C. Eugene Wolff share some key commonalities: a love of family, the will to help others, and a keen interest in lifelong learning and growth. They also both live at Rydal Park & Waters, a HumanGood Life Plan Community for older adults situated on 55 pristine acres in Jenkintown.

That's no coincidence. Rydal Park & Waters, which this year celebrates its 50th anniversary, has a long history of attracting residents who have an appetite for engagement and enrichment.

Wolff, a lifelong Philadelphian, is a prime example. At age 21, after majoring in accounting at Temple University, Wolff embarked on what would become a 40-year career as an agent with the Internal Revenue Service. He accomplished a great deal during his years of service, though many of his greatest accomplishments occurred outside of the office.

In 1971, Wolff got involved in an IRS-backed project to tutor underprivileged youth. Funding ran out a year later, but he still wanted to help. His life changed when he saw an ad for the Big Brothers Association (now known as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America). He was eager to answer the call to serve as "a positive role model" for boys in need.

His first assignment as a Big Brother: a nine-year-old African American boy named Kanti.

"That boy is 61 years old now, and I've been involved in almost every aspect of his life," Wolff says. "He's like my son. All four of his children are my grandchildren. I've had 13 or 14 assignments [between the years of 1972 and 1994], and I've continued to be involved in many of their lives through the adult years."

Wolff remains extraordinarily close to his Little Brothers; many of them routinely invite him on family vacations. He devotes a whole wall of his cottage at Rydal Waters—"my wall of life," as he calls it—to photographs of his sons, their families, and the lives they built.

Wolff moved to Rydal Park & Waters in December 2020 after many



years in Elkins Park. Although he had toured other senior living communities, he chose Rydal Park & Waters because of the campus's expansiveness and the opportunity to have a spacious cottage in the Rydal Waters neighborhood.

"Most people are downsizing when they get older, but I upsized," he says. "I went from a 1,250-square-foot home [in Elkins Park] where I lived for 34 years, to a 1,750-square-foot cottage with a two-car garage. It has two bedrooms and two bathrooms, so it's big enough that my sons and their families can stay here when they visit."

Aside from spending time with his family, Wolff loves to root for his favorite sports team, the Philadelphia Eagles. He's been an Eagles season-ticket holder since 1969 and still has the original seats—on the 35-yard line—he first purchased 55 years ago.

On campus, he takes advantage of the many activities available to Rydal Park & Waters residents. Wolff especially enjoys fitness-related activities, including hiking area trails with a group of fellow residents who call themselves "The Trailblazers." He's also a community ambassador of sorts, meeting with prospective residents to help them determine if Rydal Park & Waters is the best fit for them.

"We have an eclectic group from all walks of life, and everyone is respectful of their differences," he says. "We all look out for each other. If someone's spouse passes, we provide support for the survivor. That speaks volumes to how close-knit the community has become."

### 'A Good Place to Live'

The welcoming community is one of the primary reasons Carol Nehring chose to make a home at Rydal Park & Waters.

Originally from Amityville, New York, Nehring studied painting and interior design at Beaver College (now Arcadia University) in Glenside. She later returned to New York where she forged a career in publishing—book design, specifically, for the likes of Chanticleer Press and Reader's Digest—and raised a family with her husband, Coles.

Coles passed away in 2020. As she began contemplating a move elsewhere, she knew she wanted to be nearer to one of her two sons—a pediatric pulmonologist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia—and her grandchildren, ages four and seven.

"I wanted to live in a community because of my kids," she says. "I was grateful to my parents, who moved to a [senior living] place close to three of their kids. My mother was very active in the community. She lived to be 100 and was able to do a lot during her time there. The other good thing about living in a community like this is that, when you start to fail, you still have friends who come to see you. It was nice to see that my mother had friends and her own life away from us."

A self-described "city girl," Nehring sought a Life Plan Community within walking distance of a train station, a shopping district, and other

quality-of-life amenities. She had already been familiar with Rydal Park & Waters, where a close childhood friend and her husband resided. Although she also considered a few other options in the Philadelphia area, she found that Rydal Park & Waters checked all the boxes.

She moved into a one-bedroom corner apartment in the Rydal Park neighborhood in August 2023.

"I've lived in apartments most of my life, so I wasn't interested in a cottage; I like being surrounded by other people," she says. "I feel like I live in one of the nicest apartments here; I can look out over gardens and a stream. There's a Whole Foods and a Trader Joe's right next door, and the train station is nearby."

Her days are, in a word, full. She travels. She works on artistic projects, such as compiling al-

bums of family photographs or articles authored by her father-in-law, the late *Sports Illustrated* writer Coles Phinizy. She belongs to an off-campus hiking group, which visits trails in nearby parks, such as Alverthorpe, Pennypack, and Wissahickon.

"My apartment is close to the swimming pool, and I swim most days," she says. "Having grown up on Great South Bay, and also being a Pisces, I love the water."

In June, she was part of a team that participated in a month-long hike, bike, and swim competition against other teams from Rydal Park & Waters. Her team took first place.

"I find that there's a lot to do here, and a number of wonderful people," she says. "It's been a good place to live. I'm glad I chose it." ■



Carol Nehring, shown in her apartment at Rydal Park, fills her days with travel, artistic projects, and active pursuits, such as on-campus hiking.

## Fifty Years of Rydal Park & Waters

**R**ydal Park & Waters has spent the past 50 years earning its reputation as one of suburban Philadelphia's premier Life Plan Communities. Fifty years is a remarkable milestone, but one might say the not-for-profit community is just getting started.

Founded in 1974, Rydal Park & Waters offers a variety of social, cultural, and lifelong learning opportunities for older adults. Spacious independent living cottage homes and apartments foster an environment of independence, well-being, and a sense of community. Also, when and if needed, the community provides options for personal care, short-term rehabilitation, long-term skilled nursing, and memory support.

"Our golden jubilee celebration is a testament to

the dedication of our team members, as well as the support of our residents and their families," said Andrea Gibson, executive director at Rydal Park & Waters. "For 50 years, we have had the privilege to serve and support older adults in the greater Philadelphia area as they continue to live their lives with freedom and independence."

Located within walking distance of restaurants, stores, and the train station, Rydal Park & Waters has modern fitness centers, walking paths, a dog park, pickleball courts, and indoor and outdoor pools. In addition, Rydal offers residents access to educational and cultural lifelong learning experiences including lectures, spiritual and nondenominational religious services, classes, and musical performances.

### Rydal Park & Waters

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