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Residents at
Dunwoody Village
pursue their
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Helen Dodson,
a Dunwoody
Village resident

Living Their Best Lives

At **Dunwoody Village**, older adults join a remarkable community where an environment of comfort, security, and togetherness enables residents to pursue their passions.

Life, much like fruit, can sweeten with time—given the right setting. That has certainly been the case for Christina Burns, Helen Dodson, Robert Henderson, and Charles Ladner, all of whom reside at Dunwoody Village, a continuing-care retirement community in Newtown Square.

For more than 50 years, Dunwoody has offered its residents beautiful living spaces set in an environment designed to support every aspect of wellness. This includes dining venues, a fitness center and swimming pool, an arts and crafts studio and library, all on a beautiful, 83-acre campus. With personal care, memory care, and skilled nursing neighborhoods available to them as their needs increase, residents have the peace of mind to focus on the things in life that matter most.

Dodson, a historian and published biographer, has delved into the many recreational pursuits available at Dunwoody. She even chairs the community's Sports and Games committee.

"When my husband and I were looking for a CCRC, Dunwoody was far and away the best place," she shares. "I have to say we are delighted with our choice. We had looked at the obvious factors—the financial stability of the institution, the grounds and the facilities, the medical care—but we didn't give any thought to the people who were here. And when we got here, we found that the people were the very best part of the place."

Having grown up with three older brothers, Dodson developed a passion for sports at an early age. She has certainly explored that side of her personality at Dunwoody. She's particularly fond of swimming and putting golf, though she also plays pickleball and bocce, and enjoys competitive activities in the game room, such as shuffleboard and ping-pong.

"We have so many opportunities to stay active, exercising and participating in physical activities that also provide a social component," she adds. "We're talking with the people we're competing against or with. We're meeting new people. It's a wonderful opportunity to make new friends."

Dodson played a central role in the creation of the community's renewed putting green. Not only did she work with other volunteers to ensure plentiful seating and wheelchair and walker accessibility, but her input helped determine the placement of the holes during the course's design.

"We hold competitions from April through late October," she adds. "There's a singles competition, and then there's doubles, and we award prizes to the most holes-in-one and the lowest season average."

While some residents are more sports-minded, others prefer the arts. Kit Burns is a talented painter who also chairs the



"It's a community of vibrant people, and it's a real pleasure to be here."
—Helen Dodson, Dunwoody Village resident who chairs the community's Sports and Games committee

"Walls & Halls" art committee. She's one of many resident artists who gather in Dunwoody's on-campus art studio to express themselves creatively.

"You don't have to be a great artist to join that group at any level," Burns notes. "There are people that do watercolor, some use oil; I usually use acrylic. Then on Friday, there's a big arts-and-crafts group that gets together and we all work towards the bazaar in November."

Walls & Halls grew out of a significant renovation, during which much of the art on the walls was stored away. Committee members have since "rediscovered" the works, cataloguing them and assessing them for restoration, if needed, and inclusion in Dunwoody's current décor.

At Dunwoody Village, the arts extend to coursework for residents, including creative writing and poetry. Burns compares the environment to her alma mater, Bryn Mawr College, both in terms of its focus on the arts and the sense of belonging.

"You get a lot from knowing the other residents, and they're pretty fascinating people," she adds. "I love that the residents love and care for each other. Whenever we put up art or have a new art show, there's so much appreciation. People love to see new things and hear about the



Dunwoody resident Kit Burns is a talented painter who also chairs the "Walls & Halls" art committee.



Residents Bob Henderson and Chuck Ladner are helping to lead the community forward. Ladner previously served on Dunwoody's Board of Trustees, and Henderson shares his architectural programming and design ideas as the Board undergoes strategic planning.

creative things other people are doing. It's a very cheerful, heartwarming kind of place to be."

"Residents contribute so much to life at Dunwoody Village," remarks Dunwoody President and CEO Maureen Casey. "It's an example of *One Dunwoody*—a concept woven into our mission, vision, and values, where trustees, residents, leadership, and team members all work together to make Dunwoody a truly vibrant and connected community."

Chuck Ladner believes the ability to reconnect with old interests or develop new ones is one of the greatest strengths of a community like Dunwoody. From his perspective, people tend to live longer—and

more happily—because they have so much to do.

"One of the biggest reasons people move into communities like this is to spare their children from having to worry and care for them as they age," he adds. "If you can take that burden away from your children, it's the biggest gift you give them. They know that you're getting good health and medical care and living a happy life. It just frees them up to do what they like to do in life."

Interestingly, Ladner's relationship with Dunwoody predates his time as a resident. He served on Dunwoody's Board of Trustees from 1994 to 2003, prior to moving into the community, and as chair for the last five

years of that term. He chaired the board again from 2016 to 2021, then as a resident. During his years of stewardship, he played an integral role in designing Dunwoody's financial and housing model. By encouraging the community to embrace housing offerings that were larger, including two-floor luxury homes of 4,000 square feet, Dunwoody was able to expand and thrive.

Dunwoody continually looks for ways to grow and prepare for the future, and residents such as Bob Henderson are helping to lead the community forward. An architect by trade who lives at Dunwoody with his wife, Joni, Henderson shares his architectural programming and design ideas as the board undergoes strategic planning that will help determine how the community serves future residents.

"Right now, we're thinking about what 2040 might look like," he says. "Dunwoody has done an extraordinary job over the last 50 years of building its reputation, particularly regarding the long-term care that's built into the program. Renewal of the care center is one of the most important investments that we can make in Dunwoody's future."

"The way we deliver healthcare in 2035 will likely be very different than how we delivered it in 1985," he continues. "That's a very important thing that we want to stay on top of and continue to set the standard for what life care should be like in a CCRC."

Joni and Bob have been residents for less than two years, and he hopes they have "a long trip ahead of us still." After all, they consider Dunwoody a wonderful place to live, filled with remarkable people who continue to do remarkable things.

Fellow resident Helen Dodson agrees. In fact, she would go so far as to say she is the happiest she has ever been in terms of where she lives and with whom she spends her time.

"This is a perfect community," she adds. "When I came here, my first impression was that it was like being on a cruise because every night you'd sit at a different table and meet new, interesting people. Then I realized it's more like being back in college because we're all at the same point in life, and we have so much to offer. It's a community of vibrant people, and it's a real pleasure to be here." ■



Dunwoody Village

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