



St. James NEST

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



*From Skip Shaw,
St. James NEST
President*

Hello All! The holidays are upon us! As I write this, I think about our blessings and definitely count all the Volunteers of NEST as one for which I am thankful. You have fulfilled 4,200 Service Requests since we began operating in September of 2020. This is an amazing number and a tribute to your commitment to your neighbors.

It was wonderful to see everyone at this year's Volunteer Appreciation event in October in the Woodlands pavilion. Kudos to **Barbara Nail** and **Connie Kelly** on our Events Committee for organizing a wonderful celebration of all of you and helping us recognize our Volunteers of the Year. In addition to saluting these volunteers, this issue also features other Volunteers and Members, as well as some great events we've held and are planning in the coming year.

In the spirit of the holidays, thanks again for all you do for NEST. Make sure to stop by the Service Club's Festival of Trees at the Community Center this week and check out the NEST Holiday tree. It will be even more festive this year!

Skip

**"NO ONE IS MORE CHERISHED IN THIS
WORLD THAN SOMEONE WHO
LIGHTENS THE BURDEN OF ANOTHER."**



—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Special thanks to all the contributors of the St. James NEST December 2023 Newsletter: Thanks to Maggie Smith Roedema, Lori Foster, Linda Shaw, Lynda Needham and Meg Meyer.

Helpful Tip!



NEST's Service Providers Directory

Do you know where to find recommendations for a plumber, electrician, home care agency, or other resources? Valuable contacts are in the **Service Providers Directory** on the St James NEST website (sjnest.org). Look under the Member or Volunteer tab to find the **Service Providers Directory**. If you have a recommendation to add a provider or if you want to provide feedback to remove information from the directory, please email providers@sjnest.org.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: 2023 VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

October 17th was a glorious day which was made even more special for those who attended NEST's annual Volunteer Appreciation Event at Woodlands Park. More than 80 volunteers attended this fall-themed affair complete with lots of yummy things to eat. It was a celebration of service, community, and a tribute to what we can do when we come together with a sense of purpose and dedication.

NEST President **Skip Shaw** gave an update on the organization's growth and some of its plans for the future. He recognized the volunteer from each team who had fulfilled the largest number of service requests this year and introduced this year's Volunteer of the Year. Here's a quick profile of each of these great folks.



A tech guy through and through, **Art Solomon** completed 25% of this year's Tech Connect service requests. Art says he does not volunteer a lot, but when he heard that NEST needed help on this team, he felt this was a place he could make a contribution.

Art loves thinking about a cartoon depicting teenagers arriving to help desperate grandparents figure out their newfangled technology. "We're like surrogate grandkids. People are so happy to see us, and it feels great to be able to make a difference."



Laurie Morgan serves on more than one NEST team. She was recognized this year for her service on the Helping Hands Team. She has helped neighbors with decorations and occasional household organizing, and she has a weekly date to help a member with her trash.

Laurie appreciates that NEST gives volunteers a way to help within a timeframe that the volunteer can control. "That way, I can do more – helping means a lot to me. I think about my parents – I wish they had had this kind of support when they needed it."



Stephen Burns filled 23 service requests for the Just Checking In Team, providing support and respite care for members and their spouses. Stephen is a registered nurse who provides respite care usually once a week for three men who have some degree of cognitive loss. *(Continued on page 3)*

2023 VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR (CONTINUED)

Stephen reports, "I get so much from this. It means everything to me. If the men enjoy it and if it helps their wives, it's working on multiple levels." That is an understatement. Male members of NEST sometimes need the companionship, care and empathy that can only come from a male volunteer. Stephen's service hits home on so many levels.



Arlene Risano is on the Just Checking In Team that checks in with members via phone. For Arlene, caregiving, volunteering, and helping people is what she does – "It fills up my heart."

She has one specific NEST member she calls every weekday morning at eight o'clock. "It's a short connection that has grown to mean so much to both of us. We love to start our day with a laugh."



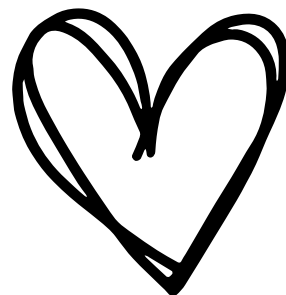
Robyn Smith is a member of the Going My Way Team that does errands for members.

She works part time, has recently had hand surgery and is active in pickleball in St. James. Additionally, she wanted to volunteer with NEST to help others. She found a way to volunteer that worked perfectly for her and for Nancy, a NEST member whose mobility and dexterity were compromised by a stroke. Robyn delivers groceries for Nancy every week. Over time they've created a great system. Robyn picks up the items Nancy has ordered, takes them into Nancy's house and helps open the containers. It's a big win for both of them.



Wayne Dennis was recognized this year for his work on the Going My Way Team, however he actually serves on three teams. Wayne was also recognized last year for his NEST service. It seems like the more he does, the more he wants to do. Wayne claims this is the second best job he has ever had - the first being his job as a stay-at-home dad. "It feels important to me to do this kind of work. I figure I'm kind of paying it forward."

(Continued on page 4)



2023 VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR (CONTINUED)



Ellen deGroof is this year's Volunteer of the Year. This is her third anniversary as the Chair of NEST's Membership Committee. When she began, NEST had 40 members. Currently, there are 170 members. Ellen not only is largely responsible for establishing the process that is currently used to screen and qualify new members, but also for creating the structure inside her team that oversees that process. It's a very big deal.

While she credits her predecessor Valerie McGhee with coming up with some of these ideas, Ellen was the person who launched the popular NEST Speaker Series, oversaw the creation of the Service Providers Directory, and rolled out the Membership Committee Area Representative Team Structure. Suffice it to say, Ellen is a Force.

When you ask Ellen, a retired physician, what motivates her to do all this, to give so much, her answer is powerful and simple. She had an "awakening" of sorts during the pandemic, realizing it was time for her to "step back up" and to live with greater purpose. "I know I'm making a difference. It's a good feeling."

We are proud to honor these seven standout volunteers from this calendar year, but even more, we are grateful for every single one of NEST's 131 volunteers who help keep our members and this organization going strong day in and day out. We could not ask for a more qualified, dedicated and caring team.



We lost the following St. James NEST Members and Volunteers since our last newsletter. May their memories be a blessing to all the lives they have touched.

James Bliss (Barbara) 11/28/2023

Ron Kruczynski (Marylou) 11/16/2023

Stillman "Saint" St Clair 7/27/23 (Volunteer)

Gordon White 7/25/23

Janice Dolan (Daughter, Colleen Hayles)
7/06/23

SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT ST. JAMES NEST



Thanks to **Marie Danco** (above right) and **Karen Nelsen** (bottom left) for helping to spread the St. James NEST word at the St. James Service Club's Volunteer Fair on Wednesday, September 13th. They received lots of inquiries about volunteer opportunities and also heard all sorts of positive feedback about NEST. The word on NEST is getting out - thanks for being great ambassadors, Karen and Marie!

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT (with a Volunteer Shoutout): PAT UNGERER



Pat and her late husband, David



Pat in her St. James home



One of Pat's many wonderful paintings - what talent!

Pat Ungerer was born in Bogota, Columbia. In 2003, Pat and her husband David moved to St. James upon completion of their new home.

Pat, a bi-lingual clinical psychologist, works as a Family Support Specialist at Smart Start, a nonprofit organization that helps children in their first 2000 days. That is the first 5 years of their life! Pat works with their Kaleidoscope Play and Learn program. She spends 36 hours per week helping kids in both Spanish and English. She really loves what she does!

Pat started using NEST after her husband passed away to help do repairs in her home that would have been extremely difficult for her to do. She literally has a list of every task, by date and volunteer performed by NEST. Truly remarkable!

She is so grateful for all the help she's received from so many wonderful NEST volunteers. But there was one person she couldn't stop talking about. Tim Hockney. She describes Tim as a perfectionist who went out of his way to make everything right. I got a tour of his accomplishments throughout her home. I have to agree with Pat...Wow!

There was one very funny moment when I first entered Pat's living room and we sat down to talk about NEST. Pat's very first words were: "NEST is such a blessing." Then I noticed this pillow on her couch...



Pat's home in St. James is lovely, filled with her artwork. When she's not teaching, she loves to paint. NEST volunteer Tim Hockney helped frame and hang some of her art. One of her fun and colorful paintings is above. *(Continued on page 6)*

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: PAT UNGERER (CONT.)

This article would not be complete if we didn't include a couple of photos of NEST volunteer Tim Hockney...



Tim Hockney golfing with a friend (Yes, that's a gator!) at The Reserve



Tim enjoying dinner with his daughter

Many thanks to Tim, and Pat wants to express her thanks to **all** the volunteers at NEST who have been so important to her in the past several months. Your efforts are so needed and so appreciated.

Senior Gear Contact Information

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Cheryl Gardner 973-819-8814
Arlene Risano 860-558-1518
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WALKERS, WHEELCHAIRS AND SCOOTERS - OH MY!

Have you heard about **Senior Gear**? Senior Gear has been in St James for some time, yet many residents are not aware of this wonderful service originally coordinated by a few St. James residents. After moving to St. James from Columbia, MD, **Teri Harrison** read about Senior Gear in a Cat-Tales article. Teri joined Senior Gear in 2012 and became chair of Senior Gear in 2013. Her team includes **Cheryl Gardner** and **Arlene Risano**.

Senior Gear loans medical equipment to St. James residents and their visiting friends or relatives for temporary use while recuperating from surgery or an injury.. Do you need a wheelchair, a walker, crutches, shower chair, potty chair, commode riser, cane, knee scooter, compression socks, etc.? Senior Gear will often have more than 100 items available for loan.

If larger medical equipment is needed, refer to **St. James NEST's Large Medical Equipment Loans** on the NEST website (sjnest.org) under Members and scroll down to Large Medical Equipment Loans. Contact **Anita Pedvis-Leftick** at anitap@sjnest.org or call our Help desk at 910-250-8388.

In summary, instead of ordering equipment from Amazon or a Medical Supply Store, reach out to **Teri Harrison** and her energetic, caring and kind team. After chatting with any of them, you will feel their smiles and their sincere desire to help you.



The Senior Gear Team (L-R):
Arlene Risano, Teri Harrison and Cheryl Gardner

Members and Caregivers Enjoy Lunch, Networking and Connections



Don and AnneMarie Keith enjoyed the luncheon and each other!



Suzanne Holland (left) and Chet Holland (right) chat up event organizer, Anita Pedvis-Leftick



Connie and Tom Hellmer are fully engaged with Yupei O'Toole and others at their table



Maureen Killoran and Marge and Bill Finley chat before lunch is served



A group shot! (L-R) Seated: Maureen Killoran, Marge and Bill Finley, Dennis and Claudia Banks. Standing: AnneMarie Keith, Yupei O'Toole, Chet and Suzanne Holland, Marie Danco, Connie Hellmer, Denise Hamer, Tom Hellmer, Bob deGroof, Anita Pedvis-Leftick, Stephen Burns, Reggie and Claude Clausen, Ellen deGroof, Don Keith



Claude Clausen (left) and Reggie Clausen (right) strike a striking pose with Marie Danco

On Friday, September 8th a group of Members living with dementia in their households, as well as Volunteers from NEST's Just Checking In team, gathered at The Reserve Club for a delicious lunch, social engagement, and caregiver networking. Candy Lee, RN and Program Director for the Lower Cape Fear LifeCare Memory Program, spoke to the group about services offered by the Memory Program. As the event wrapped up, each Member received a goodie bag with hydration bottles, snacks and a copy of the latest NEST Volunteer newsletter. The event was well received, and attendees look forward to more events that allow greater connection with friends going through similar situations in life.

Special thanks to **Denise Hamer** and **Anita Pedvis-Leftick** of NEST's Membership Committee for organizing this spirited event.

2023-2024 SPEAKER SERIES: TAKE ALL THE RIGHT MOVES FOR HEALTH & SAFETY



Brooke Vallaly and Rosalie Calarco
kicked off the 2023-2024 speaker series

St. James NEST's third Speaker Series, **Take All the Right Moves for Health and Safety**, got off to a great start in September with the first program in the series, **Your Mind Matters: The Best Way to Love Your Brain**. Speakers were Brooke Vallaly of the Eastern North Carolina Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association and Rosalie Calarco of AARP North Carolina. They dove into the science around brain health and reviewed evidence of lifestyle behaviors that may have the biggest impact in reducing risk of cognitive decline. They also provided recommendations that will help you take control of brain health.

In November, Brooke Vallaly also presented our second program in the speaker series, **Understanding An Alzheimer's Diagnosis**. While receiving an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis is life-changing, understanding what both the patient and the patient's family goes through allows you to put together a plan to help navigate this new chapter in life.

If you missed either of these information-packed programs, you can view a video of the presentations from the 2023-2024 Speaker Series page on sjnest.org, under the Events tab. There are also some great programs from previous years programs on the website.

On January 23 from 3-4:30 pm, our third program in the series will be **Strategizing Your Travel Safety**. We'll learn about travel safety essentials from Carrie Pasquarello, the CEO and Co-Founder of Global Secure Resources. Her program aims to enhance one's ability to identify, evaluate and avoid potential risks and to equip travelers with the necessary tools to ensure a fun and rewarding travel experience, while minimizing stress and ensuring safety. This program will be well-attended, so be sure to register in advance for the program at sjnest.org/events/18.

The remaining two programs in the series are:

Taking Steps to Minimize Cancer Risks for You and Your Family – Tuesday, March 19, 3-4:30 pm

The Importance of Food Choices as We Age – Tuesday, May 21, 3-4:30 pm

For a complete list of programs and descriptions, visit sjnest.org and find the 2023-2024 Speaker Series under the Events drop down on the main menu. We hope to see you at one of NEST's upcoming programs!

