



Methodist Homes of Alabama & Northwest Florida
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Methodist Homes News

A Publication of Methodist Homes of Alabama & Northwest Florida

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MONTGOMERY

Growing Joy

At Wesley Gardens (Montgomery), a quiet transformation has taken root—literally. Where an old shuffleboard court once sat, rows of raised garden beds now bloom with vibrant flowers, lush vegetables, and something even more meaningful: joy, purpose, and connection for the residents who tend them.

The garden project—ten raised beds from VEGO Garden—was more than a landscaping upgrade. It was a labor of love, a carefully cultivated vision brought to life by Life Enrichment Director **Teresa Messick**. “When I first got here,” Teresa said, “there were just five flower beds in the back, with no organization and some confusion over who could use them.” Inspired by the idea of making gardening more accessible, Teresa proposed converting the old shuffleboard court into a garden oasis, complete with raised beds designed for all mobility levels.

After presenting her dream to the Wesley Gardens Auxiliary, Teresa’s plan took root. The Auxiliary raised funds for the beds, VEGO Garden offered a wholesale rate, and soon, a new chapter of gardening began—one marked by shared joy and community pride.

Residents signed up through a garden club lottery system, pairing up to co-host garden spaces. And what they’ve grown is more than just tomatoes and tulips.

A Harvest of Happiness

“The gardens are so very, very special to us,” said resident **Clara Jehle**. “We think of them as our children now.” With over 30 kinds of flowers, the beds are a magnet for



Clara Jehle

butterflies and birds, and soon, everyone hopes, hummingbirds too. “It’s been a wonderful experience, getting outside in the cool of the morning, enjoying God’s nature.”

Margaret Oliver, who grew up on a farm, took a different approach—and an early one. “I planted before Good Friday,” she confessed with a grin, against the staff’s advice. “In the South, you have to plant before Good Friday. There are reasons for that.” Her instincts paid off—her garden was the first to flourish, overflowing with tomatoes, peppers, and flowers. “I’ve had a few nice ones—what the squirrels didn’t get!” she laughed. “But I’ve really enjoyed it. It gives me something to look forward to every day.”

Margaret’s daughter often visits to help with trimming when “the garden is about to take over the whole place,” and together they’ve harvested plenty to use and share. “I just hope it’ll keep going. It’s making the small tomatoes now more than the large ones.”

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VEGO GARDENS - Continued from Pg 1



Digging In and Growing Together

Teresa organizes a weekly “Garden Work Day” to help with tasks residents might not be able to handle alone, but otherwise, the gardens are fully resident-led. “They plant it, they water it, they harvest it,” said Administrator **Randy Allen**. “We just step in to assist when needed.”

That sense of ownership is exactly what Teresa hoped for when she carefully designed the layout. “The beds are tall enough for residents to garden while sitting on their rollators,” she explained. “They can reach everything without stepping into mud or uneven grass. It’s clean, it’s safe, and it’s easy to access from the courtyard.”

Even shopping for plants became part of the fun. Wesley Gardens arranged a trip to Home Depot so residents could pick out their own seeds and starter plants. Now there’s talk of starting seeds earlier next year—and even experimenting with

cool-weather crops like collard greens and turnips this fall.

“We’ve learned some things along the way,” Teresa said with a laugh. “Like not to plant indeterminate tomatoes unless you’re ready to wrestle six or seven-foot vines! But it’s all part of the joy of learning and growing together.”

Rooted in Community

The VEGO Garden company has taken notice, often sharing photos of Wesley Gardens’ flourishing beds on their social media. But the real reward is seen every day—in the smiles of residents, the sense of purpose they carry, and the moments of connection that bloom in every bed.

For the residents of Wesley Gardens, these garden beds are more than soil and stems. They’re daily invitations to step outside, breathe deep, and watch something beautiful grow—together.



Margaret Oliver

PANAMA CITY

Farewell To Remember: Sending A Soldier

Memorial Day has always been a meaningful occasion at Mathison Retirement Community (Panama City) — a time to honor the brave men and women who have served our country. But this year’s Flag Ceremony held a special kind of emotion that touched every heart.

Roland Sims, the son of beloved team members **Scott and Desiree Sims**, has long dreamed of becoming a United States Marine. After signing up out of high school, he faced a frustrating last-minute delay due to paperwork — a pause that tested his patience and stirred deep emotions within his family.

But in hindsight, it seems that delay was divinely timed.

Just before the Memorial Day ceremony, Roland received word from his recruiter that he would be leaving that very day — immediately after the ceremony. **Staff Sergeant Swanigan** and **Sergeant Estaverne** would attend the flag ceremony and then accompany him to board the bus to Parris Island, SC, where his journey would officially begin.

As the final note of the ceremony echoed into the air, we shared Roland’s news with

the residents. The moment turned from one of remembrance to one of profound unity and hope. With teary eyes and heartfelt applause, residents rallied around Roland and his family — offering hugs, prayers, and words of encouragement.

What could have been just another departure quietly folded into a weekday became something unforgettable: a sacred sendoff, woven with love, respect, and shared emotion.

Many of the residents spoke of feeling personally connected to Roland — some recalling their own military service, others remembering the loved ones they once sent off in uniform. His story had already become part of the Mathison community, and now, so had he.

As Roland embraced his parents and stepped forward into a new chapter, the residents of Mathison stood behind him — not only in that moment, but in the days and months to come. They vowed to follow his journey, write to him, pray for him, and cheer him on every step of the way.

To Mathison, Roland’s delayed departure wasn’t just paperwork — it was purpose. It



allowed our community to become part of something greater. And it gave Roland a sendoff worthy of a hero.

God’s timing is always perfect. And here at Mathison, so is the love we share for those who serve.



PENSACOLA



On June 12, the Faith Health Network out of Baptist Health Care sponsored lunch and a canning class at Wesley Scott Place (Pensacola). The participants learned about water bath canning to make strawberry jam. Following the class, health screenings were offered.



Judi Foster



Priscilla Simpkins

DECATUR

The Pot People

Wow! Look what the craft class at Wesley Acres (Decatur) has been up to! When the director showed resident Angel Lindley a photo on Facebook, Angel shared it with the craft class—and inspiration struck! The group pitched in, bought planting pots, and each decorated their own. These creations are proudly called “The Pot People.”



Angel Lindley



MONTGOMERY

Wesley Gardens Named A 2025 “Best of the River Region”

We are honored to announce that Wesley Gardens (Montgomery) won Best Assisted/ Senior Living in the 2025 River Region Community Choice Awards! Thank you to everyone who voted for us. Pictured are **Cassandra Williams** (Director of Nursing), **Karen Jones** (Marketing Director), and resident **Linda Cates**, who proudly accepted the award on behalf of all our residents. Linda is also pictured with the newly crowned 2025 Miss Alabama, **Emma Terry** of Leeds, AL.





Thank you 



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- Alabama-West Florida Foundation
- North Alabama Conference
- Bluff Park UM Women in Faith *Hoover*
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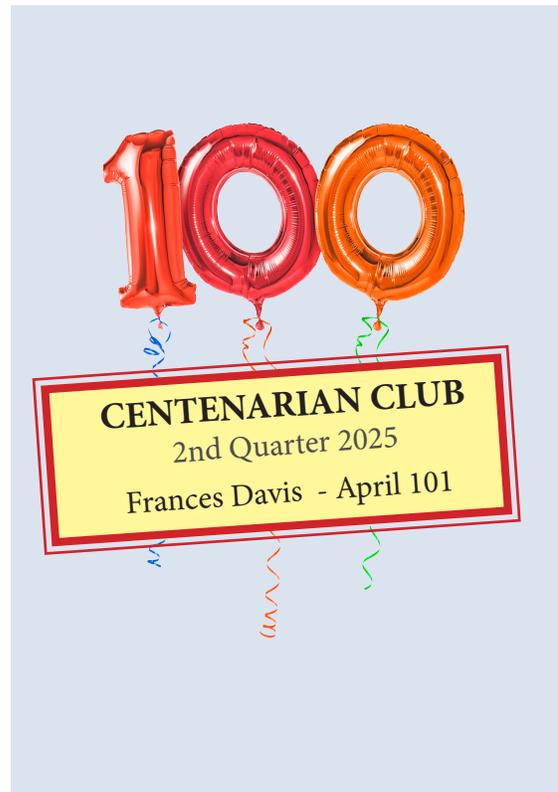


PENSACOLA

“Serve As One” Day: Garden Enhance



A big ‘Thank You’ to **Cokesbury UMC** for helping make the courtyard at Wesley Haven Villa (Pensacola) beautiful during Alabama-West Florida Conference “Serve As One” Day initiative on May 31st, The Conference coordinated with churches and volunteers to fill mission service projects across their entire region just one week ahead of their annual meeting.



DOTHAN

Pet Adoption Day



Wesley Place on Honeysuckle (Dothan) hosted a Pet Adoption Day for National Adopt-A-Pet Day! A big thank you to the **Dothan City Animal Shelter** for bringing out these lovely pets for us to enjoy and offer up for adoption!



YES - I WANT TO HELP YOUR MINISTRY

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OUR MISSION

To enrich the lives of older adults and all those who serve them in faith-based communities, where life is celebrated, relationships are valued, teamwork is embraced, service excellence is expected, and the touch of God's love is ever-present and ageless.

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BIRMINGHAM

Freedom to Play: Discover Joy & Purpose in Senior Living

For most of our adult lives, responsibility calls the shots—jobs to do, homes to maintain, families to raise, and endless to-do lists that seem to leave little room for much else. But at Fair Haven (Birmingham), something beautiful happens: that burden begins to lift.

Suddenly, life looks different.

Here, retirement community life offers something many seniors haven't felt in years—freedom. Freedom from the responsibilities that once defined their days. Freedom to laugh, to learn, to reconnect with passions long set aside. It's a chance to trade pressure for playfulness, and to rediscover the person who's been quietly waiting beneath all that busy.

At Fair Haven, residents often say it feels like turning back the clock—not in age, but in spirit. With no yard to mow, no meals to plan, and no chores waiting at home, they find themselves stepping

into a new chapter filled with meaning, connection, and even a little mischief. It's not uncommon to see spontaneous laughter over coffee, new friendships formed at the dinner table, or wide smiles at one of our many social gatherings.

From birthday parties and bell choirs to thought-provoking guest speakers and youth performances, the energy is contagious. Our robust activities calendar makes it easy to stay socially engaged—and maybe even try something new. It's never too late to join a singalong, pick up a paintbrush, or dance to a tune that reminds you of who you've always been.

Fair Haven isn't just a place to live. It's a place to thrive. A place to be care-free. A place to play.

Isn't it time?

Contact **Ms. Lee Cobb** if you're ready to find out how you can pursue your freedom at Fair Haven. 205-956-4150 ext. 3076.

