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Jacob Blake Manor

A Place To Age Well

By Victoria Scott



Among the activities available to residents of Jacob Blake Manor is Suzy Crawford's (top left) Tuesday chair exercise class. Shown with the class is social services coordinator Esther Williams-Hays (top right) who strives to create community in

the building.

The term "aging in place" has taken on new import at Jacob Blake Manor, 1615 Emerson St., since a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant brought social services coordinator Esther Williams-Hays to the building just over a year ago.

She sees old age as a two-way street. With their varied backgrounds, the residents - among them artists, Marine Corps veterans and Tuskegee airmen - have needs. But they are also folks who "have a lot to give ... a resource for the community," says Ms. Williams-Hays.

The hope in building Jacob Black was that when they moved out of their houses or apartments, "seniors wouldn't have to leave Evanston," she says.

The housing ministry of Ebenezer AME Church, Ms. Williams-Hays says, worked nearly four years to obtain the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other grants that underwrote its construction.

The building opened in October 2003, boasting 70-some affordable units for independent senior living. From the beginning a resident engineer and a site manager handled the likes of repairs, paperwork and building inspections.

But the building lacked a sense of community. Current site manager D'Juana Jones says when she arrived two years ago, "the residents had no reason to congregate."

"Swamped" with managerial details, Ms. Jones says she had little or no

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RoundTable, L.L.C. ,
1124 Florence Ave., Ste. 3
Evanston, Illinois 60202
Telephone 847-864-7741
Fax 847-864-7749

info@evanstonroundtable.com

Publisher and Manager

Mary Helt Gavin

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time to arrange activities or partnerships. The multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual residents (occupants of 10 of the units speak Russian; others speak French Creole and one, Farsi) could be proud of the sparkling hallways and laundry facility. But they rarely conversed in the elevator or parking lot, says Ms. Jones.

Except for the few who had been acquainted before moving in, they did not know each other.

Enter Ms. Williams-Hays, who sees herself as an advocate for the residents. Though HUD rules prohibit her using a religious title, residents slip into calling her "Minister Esther" for her role at Ebenezer Church. She speaks of helping residents "age in place" by attending to their "mind, body and spirit."

Her first priority, she says, was to "create community." Old age, she says, "is a new stage of the life journey. It is challenging for some; the propensity is to stay sequestered." She talks about "enjoy[ing] where we are now. Let's live."

Ms. Williams-Hays conducts confidential assessments to determine whether residents have what they need to live independently - from doctors' appointments and eyeglasses to advice on healthy eating.

Within a week of her arrival at Jacob Blake she asserted her presence by addressing the hot topic of the moment: She slipped flyers under apartment doors for a help session on MediCare Part D.

"All 74 apartments responded by the end of the day," she laughs. Setting a precedent, she invited families. Since then she has called on CVS pharmacy to conduct blood pressure screenings and glucose-tolerance testing; Medic-Alert and Lifeline to discuss their services (devices worn around neck or wrist with a call button that summons help in case of a fall); Midwest Palliative Care to explain the living will; Jewel and Dominick's grocery stores to offer healthy recipes.

She has instituted a calendar of weekly events - for fun and to address the "psycho-social aspect of aging, staving off depression and loneliness," she says.

An activity schedule gives residents things to look forward to, says Ms. Jones. "They don't have to feel stuck in their little apartment. It's not just another boring day."

Teacher Suzy Crawford's Tuesday afternoon exercise class, sponsored by Evanston-Skokie Valley Senior Services, averages eight or nine attendees. As incentive, participants earn a gift certificate for a filled attendance card.

The 45 minutes of chair aerobics each week have made Katherine Mitchum stronger. "I can hold my feet up better, and my arms," she says. Lucile Harris says, "I can see a difference in my movement." Muriel Davis, a new resident, is all smiles about meeting people in the class.

Thursday afternoons the social scene revolves around the "Panera Café" featuring bread and pastries donated by Panera Bread, while Friday nights



are for "hanging out," says Ms. Jones. Originally organized by Ms. Williams-Hays, they have evolved into resident-run movie or chess nights, sometimes with potluck - or pizza - dinners. "It makes for home," Ms. Jones says.

Ms. Williams-Hays has brought her background in art and gallery management, along with a master's degree in human services prevention and intervention community wellness, to bear on Jacob Blake programming. "I use the arts as a prevention tool," she says.

A series she calls "Getting To Know Your Neighbor" debuted with flower arrangements by a legally blind resident. Hubert Thomas, a self-taught artist, hung a retrospective of self-portraits and astonished his audience by saying it was his first show.

Residents can get to know the City as well. It is "important that [tenants] know they aren't just warehoused. Life happens every day," says Ms. Williams-Hays. Recently Alderman Delores Holmes and District 65 School Board candidate Bonnie Lockhart have come to discuss issues. Not only do the residents have a vote, says Ms. Williams-Hays, but they also "impact the opinions of several generations."

A celebration of life now follows the death of a resident, when the family agrees - a sharing of stories and of mutual grief and "a chance [for families] to learn about this part of their life," says Ms. Williams-Hays.

Since the social services coordinator was hired, Jacob Blake Manor "has become more of a community," says Ms. Jones. She continues, "I don't know of any tenant here that doesn't like it."

Water: A Precious Resource

By Eleanor Revelle

Here on the edge of Lake Michigan it's easy to think that we have an inexhaustible source of fresh water. In fact, the amount of water that Illinois is allowed to withdraw from the lake is regulated by a U.S. Supreme Court decree, and the allocation is almost fully used.

Careful management of this precious resource is essential if we are to ensure a reliable water supply for future generations.

Moreover, using water efficiently also saves energy. The biggest use of electricity for most cities is supplying water and cleaning it up after it has been used.

Water conservation is clearly an important component of sustainability. How can we, as individual consumers, help?

Saving water indoors

Indoor water usage in a typical single family home in the United States is about 70 gallons/person/day. But fixing leaks, installing water-efficient

plumbing fixtures, and changing some everyday habits can reduce water usage significantly, to around 45 gallons/person/day.

Fix those leaks

- Leaks account for about 13 percent of the water used in a typical home. A slowly dripping faucet or a toilet that keeps running can waste thousands of gallons of water a year. To check for leaks, read the water meter before and after a two-hour period in which no water is being used. After the test period, if the meter has a higher reading, there is probably a leak.

Buy water-saving fixtures and appliances

- Toilets are typically the greatest water-user in the house, accounting for more than one-quarter of the total used in a home each day. Replacing an older 3.5-gallons-per-flush (gpf) toilet with a 1.6-gpf, low-flush model will save at least 10 gallons of water per person day. New lower-flow dual-flush toilets will cut usage even further. By reducing water bills, the newer toilets will pay for themselves in just a few years.
- Replacing older showerheads with low-flow fixtures and installing low-flow aerators in existing faucets are both low-cost ways to save water. And by cutting the demand for hot water, this step will result in energy savings as well.
- Water-efficient dishwashers and clothes washers also help save water - and energy.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is launching a new program, WaterSense (<http://www.epa.gov/watersense/>), to help consumers identify products and programs that meet tough water-efficiency and performance criteria. High-efficiency toilets will be the first product to display the new WaterSense label, signaling that the fixture has been independently certified by a third party to confirm that it meets the EPA criteria.

Turn off the tap

- A few small changes in everyday habits can result in significant water savings. Turn off the tap while brushing teeth and save well over 1000 gallons/person/year. Take a five-minute shower (12.5 gallons of water with a new showerhead) instead of a bath and save 20-30 gallons each time. Look for more water-saving tips from online resources such as "Water: Use It Wisely" (<http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/index.shtml>).

Conserving water outside

In an urbanized area such as ours, roads, rooftops and parking lots cover much of the landscape and prevent rainwater from soaking into the ground and replenishing groundwater. Rainwater runoff flows instead into the sewer system, picking up oil, pesticides and other pollutants on the way. In Evanston's combined sewer system, the stormwater and sanitary wastes are collected in the same pipe and then treated together before being discharged and draining to the Mississippi.

Green solutions to stormwater management take a different approach, making use of rainwater where it falls. Rainwater is treated as an asset rather than a waste product. Many simple green solutions can start with each of us.

- Using permeable paving for driveways and parking areas will allow

rainwater to seep into the ground, thus recharging groundwater and reducing stormwater runoff. (To see permeable pavers "in action," take a look at the new parking area in front of the Evanston Ecology Center.)

- Rainwater can be "harvested" - collected as it runs off the roof and stored in rain barrels or a cistern for future landscape irrigation. Benefits include lower water bills, less waste of precious lake water, reduced demand on the municipal water system, and increased groundwater recharge.
- Replacing some (or all) of our lawns with natural landscaping will save water and energy as well as benefit the natural environment. Lawn maintenance is water-intensive - some 30 percent of our water is used to irrigate lawns - and lawnmowers cause 5 percent of the nation's air pollution. Native plants, on the other hand, help reduce runoff and minimize the need for watering. They do not need fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides. And they provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects.

There is plenty that each of us can do to conserve and protect our precious water resources. Let's not take Lake Michigan for granted.

"The Welsh Girl"

A Book Review By Sue Brooke

"The Welsh Girl" by Peter Ho Davies is a brilliant novel set during World War II.

As the book opens the people of Wales, never fond of the British, are incensed to find British troops on their land - especially when they learn the soldiers are building prisoner-of-war camps.

The locals meet at the town pub to discuss this latest English "occupation." Though the troops usually come, too, the townspeople do not interact with them much. The pub owner, with the support of the local citizens, eventually bans the British from the premises, though it means losing the profits of their patronage.

Esther is the barmaid. Her father is a former quarry worker who has herded sheep since the quarries closed. Esther's mother has died, and she and her father have taken in an evacuee, a 12-year-old boy from England. Like many other children he left England by train in search of a safe haven from the bombings.

In the final months of the war the various characters in the book grapple with the meaning of virtue and disgrace and face the issues that evoke them.

Esther is keeping her romance with a German soldier a secret. The infamous German, Rudolph Hess, is being held in Wales, claiming amnesia after flying to England to negotiate - or spy. A German refugee named Rotheram is assigned to interrogate him. Raised Lutheran, Rotheram never really knew his Jewish father. Yet after the Nazis accused him of

being Jewish, he and his mother fled to England. Rotheram disclaims his heritage, vehemently denying Mr. Hess's charge that he is Jewish.

Karsten Simmering is a German soldier who is brought to the prison camp after he surrenders. He hides much of the truth of his situation in letters home to his mother, knowing that to have surrendered is a disgrace.

In this wartime setting former enemies become allies, and enemies are shown to be as human as their foes.

It is the Welsh girl, Esther, who must redefine the word "welsh," whose meaning, "swindle or fail to carry out a promise," derives from an English slur against the Welsh.

Almost a Family Affair at Bluestone.



Pictured left to right are John Enright, owner of Bluestone, and his son Jack; Tom Leoni, Gail Leoni, Marty Leoni, Claire Leoni, Jeff Leoni, Greg Leoni and Josh Pedroza.

An Evanstonian and her friend offered their gift of love and art to the Evanston community last week, as Gail Leoni and Josh Pedroza signed copies of "A Glimpse," a small book of essays by Ms. Leoni with illustrations by Mr. Pedroza, at the Bluestone Restaurant on Central Street. Most pieces are very short, Ms. Leoni's sketches in writing etched a little more clearly by Mr. Pedroza's drawings. Yet each has a presence, and many have an underlying darkness that make fine reading. "A Glimpse" is available for \$15 through PublishAmerica.com, Barnes&noble.com and borders.com.

Eye on Evanston

By John Macsai

Recommended Reading

"It is because architecture is an essentially public art form that we need some shared sense of architectural value," said Jim Holt, in his recent New York Times review of Alain de Botton's new book, "The Architecture of Happiness." The book is a small, handsome volume that I recommend highly.

While I would not go so far as crediting good buildings with causing "happiness," I certainly agree that buildings can be a pleasure to look at, delightful to be in, and comfortable to use. There is no question in my mind that architecture has the power to communicate.

It is easier to judge architecture if the subject is a classical-style (Greco-Roman) building. Here symmetry and the well-known orders (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian) rule; theorists from Vitruvius and after provided a layman with examples against which to compare any new building. Renaissance treatises by Alberti and Palladio provided the same measures.

With the beginning of the Gothic style, the doors opened to a less rigid, more picturesque architecture that went beyond symmetry and borrowed from Islam and even from ancient Egypt. Finally, the result in the 19th century was the chaotic eclecticism that permitted a broad mixing of styles.

Modernism, which followed the eclectic period, used new materials (steel, concrete, large panes of glass) and industrial techniques. The public frequently received it coldly. Modern art became acceptable, but the architects of the Bauhaus and LeCorbusier himself were alien and little understood, and Mies Van Der Rohe was way too severe. The closer we get to today's design (exemplified in the extreme by the architects Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry or Daniel Libeskind) the more bewildering it seems.

As we look at new buildings, as we so frequently do in Evanston, this question arises: Are there any criteria by which to judge these additions other than function? Can the layman, just by looking, form a valid opinion? Here are my suggestions:

UNITY The way the parts of the building communicate the same style and spirit as the total building. For instance, no Mansard roof on a Prairie School building.

SILHOUETTE The way the building forms an outline against the sky: rich and interesting, or plain and littered with mechanical junk.

BASE The way the building grows out of the ground, the way it relates to the street, to the pedestrian.

ORDER The way the parts (windows, bays or balconies) repeat and relate to each other; the way they create rhythm, symmetry or other kind of order -- or even a planned disorder.

HIERARCHY The way the importance of some elements - the entrance, for example - is emphasized relative to other elements; how it is recognized, even celebrated, in comparison to others.

CHARACTER The way the building suggests a mood, such as severe simplicity or picturesque complexity. Each is in its own way valid as long as it is consistently and logically carried through.

CONTEXT The way the building fits into its surroundings, the visual relationship between the building and its neighbors. Even opposition is a form of communication if it is artfully accomplished.

Mr. Holt, the reviewer of "The Architecture of Happiness," points out that "in a liberal society, there is as much disagreement on what constitutes the best life (of happiness) as there is on what constitutes the best-built environment to live in." He knows Evanstonians well.

*"The Architecture of Happiness" By Alain de Botton, Illustrated, 280 pp.
Pantheon Books, 2006*

'The Namesake'

A Film Review By Brian Murphy

"The Namesake," Jhumpa Lahiri's 2004 novel chronicling the American assimilation of two generations of an immigrant Indian family, is a powerful tale that deserves the big-screen treatment. Sooni Taraporevala's compelling screenplay, combined with acclaimed director Mira Nair's ("Monsoon Wedding") delicate, detailed handling of the material leads to three-fourths of a great film.

The last quarter of the film, after the tragedy, suffers from pacing issues, as a little too much of the novel's material was crammed into the 122-minute running time. Ms. Nair could have benefited from either cutting some of the material or by extending it. Scenes towards the end of the film are not allowed ample time to breathe, and that brevity saps the story and the performances of some emotional weight.

Beginning in the early 1970s "The Namesake" follows the lives of Ashoke Ganguli (Irfan Khan) and Ashima (Tabu). Their arranged marriage tears Ashima from her family and her Calcutta home and transplants her in New York with her new husband, who is still a stranger to her.

Ashoke and Ashima's struggle to coexist is heartbreaking and, eventually, heartwarming. Mr. Khan and Tabu are exceptional actors, and their performances here are at the pinnacle of their professions. Directed deftly by Ms. Nair, there is no need for extraneous dialogue; we feel their love for one another grow through subtle actions. Ashoke, still scarred by a tragedy, awakes from a nightmare only to be brought back to sleep by Ashima gently stroking his head.

The two slowly immerse themselves in American culture. Ashoke furthers his career while Ashima must learn everything else, such as going to the laundromat for the first time. They have a son and a daughter, who must also learn to deal with being minorities.

The casting director either took a leap of faith by casting Kal Penn as Gogol, Ashoke and Ashima's son, or wanted a recognizable commodity. Mr. Penn, known primarily for his roles in slacker comedies ("Van Wilder," "Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle"), is adequate, and the story helps by playing to his strengths - Gogol gets high, hangs out with his friends, and jams out to Pearl Jam's "Once" midway through the film.

Ashoke struggles to empathize with Gogol, who begins to shun his parents and his culture, dates a white girl (Jacinda Barrett) and wishes to change his first name to something less foreign-sounding.

A vacation to India to see their relatives helps. Gogol decides to become

an architect after visiting the Taj Mahal. However, back in America, his distance from his family grows until a tragedy occurs that is more than likely to elicit a tear or two.

However, in the end, the overall achievement is a powerful and dramatic film that is important for Americans of all generations of immigrants to see.

2 hr. 2 min. Rated PG-13 for sexuality/nudity, a scene of drug use, some disturbing images and language.

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