

Transforming care for individuals with
Alzheimer's disease and other dementias



seeds



Dr. Abram "Abe" Shmerling (top left to right) in 1950 with wife Fran, sisters Rita and Dot, and parents Herman and Molly.

Five Years After Opening Doors to Residents, We Look Back on Where Abe's Garden® Took Root

By Kristina Krawchuk

A pioneer in community health, Abram "Abe" Shmerling, MD, never met a stranger in his 45 years of practice. After receiving his medical degree from Vanderbilt University Medical School, Dr. Shmerling settled in Nashville and set out to make a difference in a highly segregated city. His unwavering dedication and compassion to the underserved was a catalyst to co-establishing Southeast Nashville's Woodbine Clinic, one of Middle Tennessee's first racially integrated practices. In this economically depressed area of the city, patients of all races sat side by side in the waiting room and were treated as equals. This practice continued until the day Dr. Shmerling retired.

WHAT WE DO

Abe's Garden® is establishing a model of residential, day and community-based programs for those with Alzheimer's disease. The goal is to transform care for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias throughout the United States by providing an unprecedented level of care for individuals diagnosed with these disorders. Equally important, it is a site of research and teaching, setting a new standard for other programs and residential communities devoted to caring for our nation's rapidly expanding senior population.

Continued on Page 2



In 1995, Abe was diagnosed with Alzheimer's – a disease that robbed the lives of both his mother and sister Rita.



Thanks to Dr. Shmerling, employees and patients were integrated at Woodbine Clinic in the 1950s. Patients who did not agree with this practice were politely referred to another physician.

The disease slowly progressed over the course of 11 years. During this time, the family was forced to move Abe to five different care communities due to what staff deemed “behavior issues.” Abe was chronically bored and confused with the various new environments. His family

was shocked by the lack of quality services for people with Alzheimer's. As a result, Abe's son, Michael, sought out to meet the need for standardized quality dementia care.

Michael assembled a team of professionals, including sister Judy Shmerling Given (one of Abe's Garden's first hires and now Senior Director of Campus Development), and toured care communities considered to be top in the country. They identified practices that were working and extracted the best services and programs to craft a cutting-edge memory care center unlike any other in the country. Michael's vision for this unparalleled model of care came to fruition nearly a decade after Abe died from Alzheimer's in 2006.

Abe's Garden® continues Abe's legacy of pioneering change. As Abe's Garden welcomed its first residents in 2015, Senior Living

News honored Abe's Garden® with the Architecture and Design Award for Best Stand-Alone Memory Care. Designed with a central, secured courtyard to engage socialization, stimulate senses, and foster person-directed care, Abe's Garden exists to improve the lives of residents, families, and caregivers.



Abe and Fran Shmerling welcomed their first child, Jim, in 1954.

Reflections from Board Chair Michael D. Shmerling

Well before his Alzheimer's disease diagnosis, my dad, Abe, wrote “Something Has to Be Done,” an essay addressing his frustration with society's apathy towards programs and care models available to those with dementia. His sensitivity to the issue was based on his own medical practice experience, as well as his genealogy, having lost both his mother and sister Rita to Alzheimer's.

Prior to his own death in 2006, it was obvious to me that, as usual, Dad was right. His disillusionment with dementia care options was timely and real. *Something had to be done!*

Our family's disheartening search for a satisfactory home away from home for my dad during his progressing condition demonstrated just how right he was and ignited the inspiration and personal call to act. The dream of creating real change in dementia care by building a “model of excellence” was born; aggregating best practices and introducing new, better models of care became the goal.

Over the next eight years, the dream transformed into the reality known as Abe's Garden®. And now, five years after opening the memory care center's doors to residents, the

transformation continues through our steadfast mission to continuously improve Alzheimer's care quality by raising the bar and sharing the playbook along the way. *We are doing something... something impactful.*

We have much to celebrate on this anniversary, yet I am even more excited and confident that we are just getting started.

Respectfully,

Inaugural Team Members Reflect on Abe's Garden's Early Days

What do you know now about memory care that you didn't know on your first day at Abe's Garden®?

"I realized that families need a lot of support. So many do not understand the disease. But the education we give residents' families to help them understand, not only helps them but also helps us." ~ *Vicky Raines, Business Office Manager (team member for 19 years)*

"How effective the Hearthstone Institute's evidence-based *I'm Still Here*® techniques are at engaging people with dementia." ~ *Walter Wilson, MSN/RN, Manager of Clinical Care (7 years)*

"I worked in senior care prior to Abe's Garden and received extensive training, but that experience didn't prepare me for the individual relationships I have built over the years." ~ *Daryn Moran, Culinary Services (5 years)*

"How absolutely necessary it is for our residents to have a sense of purpose. I also learned how important it is to slow down and take time to talk with residents. They sense our love and

our commitment to them. If we rush by them, they are aware and may feel unimportant. We are here, in their home; they are not at work with us." ~ *Beverly Theis, LCSW, Sr. Director, Resident and Family Support (5 years)*



Beverly Theis (c.) was thrilled to see late resident Herb Johnson light up when he saw Titan the horse in the Abe's Garden® courtyard. Photo by Robert Heller

What is one of your most treasured Abe's Garden® memories/moments working at Abe's Garden®?

"Meeting our first resident, Mr. Bill." ~ *Jeannie Davis, Housekeeping Manager (15 years)*

"A couple moved their parents in, with Dad living at Abe's Garden and Mom in Park Manor Independent Living. Mom and their daughter were visiting with

Dad in the courtyard. We brought out a push mower and some gardening tools. Dad began cutting the grass while his wife and daughter planted tomatoes in the garden. It felt so natural and like home for them. This epitomized what I'd envisioned Abe's Garden could be for families." ~ *Judy Shmerling Given, Sr. Director, Campus Development (12 years)*

"It isn't a specific moment but a specific feeling ... The feeling of seeing comfort come to families when they know their loved one is in a safe place and they will be greatly cared for." ~ *Jacob Pursell, Senior Director of Facility Management (12 years)*

"I didn't realize the impact care partners have in residents' lives. I treasure the moments when I can make a resident smile or find out whatever it is that I need to do to comfort them." ~ *LaCola Parker, Care Partner (7 years)*



Care Partner LaCola Parker guiding late resident Jane Hill to the dining room. Photo by Dan Heller

Vanderbilt's Impression on Abe's Garden®

What has been the most significant project you played a role in at Abe's Garden®?

"The development and implementation of an observation-based quality improvement system to provide standardized metrics in real-time about the consistency and quality of daily care processes. This same system also serves as a routine competency evaluation for direct-care providers and a structure for supervisors to provide objective, constructive feedback about care quality. It's critical to ensuring care quality and is unique to Abe's Garden, even though every place that provides long-term dementia care services needs this kind of system in place." ~ *Director, Vanderbilt Center for Quality Aging Sandra F. Simmons, PhD, MA, coauthor of three published research papers with Abe's Garden® and professional consultant and integral partner to the organization since 2008*

A Word from Abe's Garden's First Executive Director

"Continuing to be on the Abe's Garden Board of Directors was a natural way for me to retire from being involved in the initial planning of Abe's Garden and then its first Executive Director. To have been involved with the 'dream' of developing a groundbreaking memory care center, then a part of it becoming a reality has been such a pinnacle in my working life. Throughout the entire process, the mission was – and has always been – about focusing on providing the highest level of care for our residents." ~ *Charlotte Nesbitt Langford, Abe's Garden® Board Member, Executive Director (2008-2011) and Interim Chief Executive Officer in 2018*

**All photos in this issue were taken prior to COVID-19 physical distancing and safety protocols*

5

Advancements Through Philanthropic Partnerships

1

An Evidence-Based Memory Care Community

Capital campaign contributions financed the construction of Abe's Garden®; nearly a decade of researching recommended environments, lighting, furniture and care programs designed for those living with Alzheimer's disease; the conversion of 21 Park Manor independent living apartments to offer assisted living; and improvements to common areas in Park Manor, including a new amenity area that houses a wellness center, library and salon.



The Therapeutic Garden Design award-winning central courtyard promotes independence by providing a secure outdoor area for Abe's Garden® residents. Photo by Dan Heller

2

An Endowed Chair at Vanderbilt University Medical Center

The Abram C. Shmerling, MD, Chair in Alzheimer's Disease and Geriatric Medicine, made possible by generous gifts and currently held by geriatrics specialist Laura L. Dugan, MD, was established to build research programs in geriatric medicine and target improvement in quality of care for those living with dementia, including Abe's Garden® residents.

"Support from this endowed Chair plays a pivotal role in expanding geriatric medical care at Vanderbilt, including training of the next generation of physicians in how to diagnose and care for those with dementia," says Dr. Dugan. "This support has also enhanced Vanderbilt's ability to obtain research grants focused on improving care of older adults, including those with dementia."

3

Community-Based Programs

The pilot program for the Abe's Garden® Community Group, which provides engagement, socialization, and support for those with the earliest stages of dementia, was funded through philanthropic partnerships.

"While I have found every new program and opportunity so exciting to be a part of, I am most proud of the Abe's Garden Community Group," beams Judy Shmerling Given, Senior Director of Campus Development. "I believe we've designed an exceptional program for people in the earliest stages of this disease and filled a much-needed gap in services for people living with dementia."

4

Employee Recognition and Training Initiatives

Foundation grants and individual gifts provide team members with training from Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute on topics including self-management, coaching skills, active listening and clear communication; help implement and sustain rewards to recognize employees for outstanding work; and create wellness opportunities for team members.



Abe's Garden® Community Group (AGCG) participants enjoyed reminiscing during a "Summer of Love" tie-dye activity. Photo by Connie Tomlin

5

Sharing of Best Practices

Important discovery of dementia-related best practices are only consequential and relevant if broadly shared. That's how the bar is raised on Alzheimer's care. Philanthropy funds free access to best practices developed by Abe's Garden and elsewhere. An array of educational information and care approaches are made available by Abe's Garden® at no cost to the public, including caregiving videos that have been viewed over 330,000 times by people around the globe.



Sr. Director of Campus Development Judy Shmerling Given spends 1:1 time engaging with Abe's Garden resident Glynn Clark. Photo by Kristina Krawchuk

Donor Spotlight:

BETH ZEITLIN



*Beth Zeitlin with
Board Chair
Michael D. Shmerling (l.)
and late resident
Sam Bartholomew.
Photo by Robert Heller*

Beth Zeitlin has been dedicated to the Abe's Garden® mission since 2007, when Michael D. Shmerling first shared with her his vision of establishing an Alzheimer's disease center of excellence in Nashville. The Music City native enthusiastically signed on to be one of the first employees of Abe's Garden®. Michael gave her an office and an endless supply of his time, and she began building the organization's brand and securing the philanthropic support to build Abe's Garden®. This initial campaign successfully secured \$9 million. "Beth shared my vision and joined forces with me to make that vision a reality," beams Shmerling.

Throughout her 12+ year tenure as Director of Marketing and Development, Beth developed a sincere approach with individuals and foundations that earned her numerous lifelong friends and yielded nearly \$17 million to advance the Abe's Garden® mission. While securing ten dollar to \$2 million contributions, Beth also identified and stewarded numerous board members, frequently stating that her goal was for each new recruit to advance the organization to ever-greater heights.

She enjoyed using her skills beyond volunteer and philanthropic endeavors, frequently securing funds for a project then guiding its implementation. For example, she secured grant funding for, then oversaw the production of, free caregiving resources, including educational videos. Her efforts fostered many of the organization's most pivotal collaborations – improving the quality of dementia care with Vanderbilt Center for Quality Aging and integrating evidence-based strategies with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Lighting Research Center.

These efforts extended to joining fellow leadership team members in developing community-based programs benefitting people with dementia and their caregivers. One such program was Abe's Garden® Community Group, Middle Tennessee's first day program designed for those in the early stages of dementia.

"Joining the Shmerling family in transforming Abe's Garden from an inspiring tribute to their father to an international Alzheimer's care model has been the most gratifying professional experience of my life," Beth says. "What I've learned from Michael, the residents and program participants,

family members, volunteers, board members, and my esteemed colleagues from every department has provided me a foundation that is more solid than any I could have envisioned."

Her gratitude combined with her commitment to improving the lives of those impacted by Alzheimer's disease are the reasons Beth has contributed financially to Abe's Garden® for 11 consecutive years. In 2018, she included Abe's Garden® in her estate plan, becoming a founding member of the Perennial Society.

Beth recently transitioned away from her professional role at Abe's Garden® to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions and play a more active role in reducing human environmental impact. OneDey, the internet company she founded, increases access to quality, eco-friendly products and highlights the sustainably focused companies that produce them.

"Beth demonstrated unwavering commitment to the Abe's Garden mission," says Shmerling. "She led the marketing and development efforts to establish Abe's Garden as a locally, nationally, and even internationally recognized brand with a sterling reputation. I'm forever grateful."

5 YEARS
OF
CARE

127
RESIDENTS

70K+
RESIDENTIAL
NIGHTS

COMMUNITY-BASED
PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

63

THE CLUB AT
ABE'S GARDEN®
Memory Care
Day Program

(launched in March 2016)

30

ABE'S GARDEN®
COMMUNITY GROUP
Early-Stage Memory
Care Support

(launched in November 2017)

330K+
VIEWS

of Abe's Garden's
educational video
series for caregivers,
available for free at
[abesgarden.org/
care-videos](http://abesgarden.org/care-videos)

ABE'S GARDEN® JOURNEYS

"Abe's Garden serendipitously opened its doors at a time when we were out of options for care. My husband, Sam, was one of Abe's Garden's first residents. Within weeks [of him moving into Abe's Garden], I settled into a new routine of peace knowing that we could begin the journey of healing. We joined a community of dedicated caregivers, nurses, doctors and team members who planned resident activities and counseled our family. The Abe's Garden team stood by us through the Alzheimer's journey and, three years later, were there when Sam entered heaven, hugging us through tears as we celebrated his life. Through this journey, they became family." ~ Vicki Bartholomew, wife of late Abe's Garden® resident Sam Bartholomew

"It is 10:33 a.m. on a Friday – one of the two happiest hours of my week. This is my time to do whatever I want and know that my husband Johnny is thoroughly enjoying his Zoom session with [Abe's Garden Community Group leaders] Khette [Cox] and Malloree [Grimes], and [the other Community Group participants]. My gratitude to these wonderful ladies is limitless. They give total joy by holding biweekly Zoom sessions for the Community Group participants and weekly sessions for those of us who care for them. These Zoom programs are a wonderful stopgap measure until in-house programs begin again. Thank you, Abe's Garden, for making these times possible for Johnny and for me." ~ Betty Jane Barringer, wife of early-stage dementia program Abe's Garden® Community Group participant John Barringer

"I became involved with Abe's Garden in 2015 as a volunteer photographer. I knew it was a special and unique place by just observing the interactions

between caregivers and residents. The music programs, learning groups, craft making and games all make Abe's Garden the place to be. Having nurses Donna [Finto-Burks], Nanci [Collins], and Andrew [DeLong] there give everyone a great deal of confidence.

My dad was still going to work every day in Columbia, but he was in rapid decline. I remember hoping that when the time came, he would be able to live at Abe's Garden.

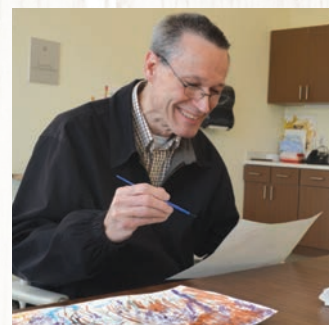
I have window visits with him every day and I am thrilled that he smiles and always says that he feels 'fine' and 'great' when I ask him how he's feeling. His caregivers, Katrina [Owens] and Monique [Jackson], tell me that he eats every bite of breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Many thanks to Abe's Garden staff and caregivers! So glad you are here to provide a much-needed and greatly appreciated service!" ~Robert Heller, son of Abe's Garden® resident Gene Heller



*Resident Gene Heller enjoys the Abe's Garden courtyard.
Photo by Robert Heller*

"One of the things that has always struck me about Abe's Garden is the willingness to think outside the box. I always felt like [my husband] Joe was treated as an individual. As Joe's condition changed, the team members were always searching for practical ways to adjust his care and engagement and to problem-solve when he struggled. They encouraged him to try painting,

which he loved, and that became a source of pride and accomplishment for him. They continued to nurture his lifelong love of music as a form of connection and comfort. And they allowed him to wander freely through the residence, understanding that movement was a form of therapy for him." ~ April Simpkins, wife of late Abe's Garden® resident Joe Simpkins



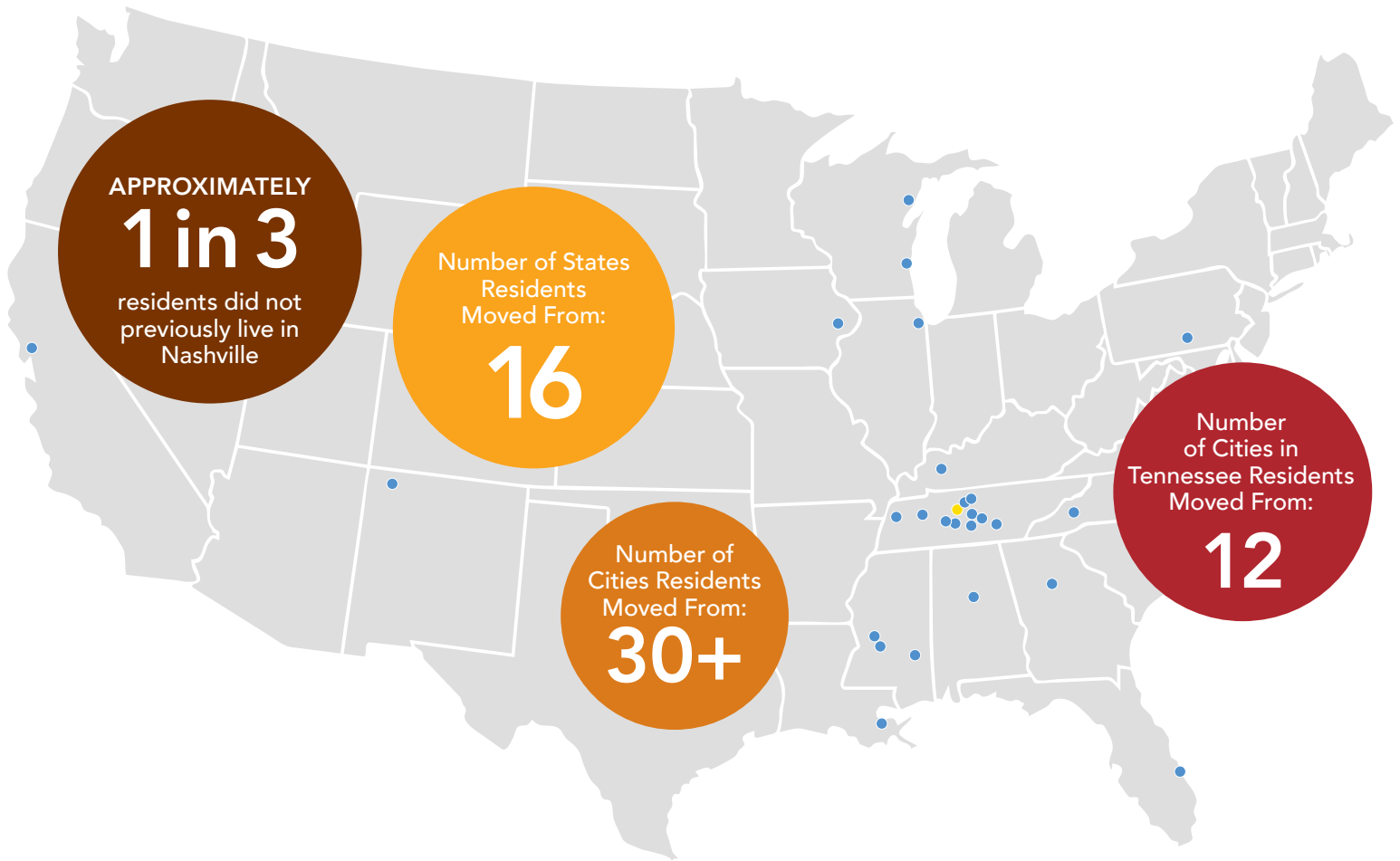
*Late Abe's Garden resident Joe Simpkins frequently created art.
Photo by Amy Eskind*

"We are so thankful that my mom was living at Abe's Garden when the pandemic started. If she had been somewhere else, or at home, I would not have felt as comforted as I do. Abe's Garden has been out in front of things from the very beginning. We know how much everyone cares about the residents and the extra effort they are putting in to keep both residents and staff [as safe as possible]." ~ Shanna Whitelaw, daughter of Abe's Garden® resident Barbara Curley



Resident Barbara Curley was thrilled to be crowned Abe's Garden's 2019 Prom Queen. Photo by Lori Latusek

RESIDENTS MOVED FROM VARIOUS U.S. REGIONS TO RESIDE AT ABE'S GARDEN



We greatly appreciate our dedicated team members who have been working at the community since Abe's Garden's inception.

LENGTH OF SERVICE

12+ Years

Vicky Raines, Business Office Manager, 19 years
Jeannie Davis, Housekeeping Manager, 15 years
Judy Shmerling Given, Senior Director of Campus Development, 12 years
Samantha Hamilton, Concierge Manager, 12 years
Jacob Pursell, Senior Director of Facility Management, 12 years
Paul Smith, Concierge Services, 12 years

9–11 Years

Anne Thompson, Culinary Services, 11 years
Pamela Witherspoon, Care Partner, 11 years
Galina Bodisteanu, Housekeeping, 10 years
Cheryl Maney, Care Partner, 10 years
Ion Bodisteanu, Housekeeping, 9 years

5–8 Years

Donna Starks, Care Partner Liaison, 8 years
LaCola Parker, Lead Care Partner, 7 years
Walter Wilson, Clinical Care Manager, 7 years
Chauncey Beddingfield, Culinary Team Member, 6 years
Robin Cashion, Licensed Practical Nurse, 5 years
Monica Flowers, Care Partner, 5 years
Tamatha Jackson, Concierge Services, 5 years
Mariann "Izzy" Knox, Staff Scheduler, 5 years
Matthew Monier, Human Resources Coordinator, 5 years
Daryn Moran, Lead Cook, 5 years
Rana Morris, Licensed Practical Nurse, 5 years
Beverly Theis, Senior Director of Resident Services, 5 years



115 Woodmont Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37205

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nashville, TN
Permit No. 704



Abe's Garden® is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

5 WAYS YOU CAN BUILD A STRONGER TOMORROW AT ABE'S GARDEN®

We know you have a lot of options to give during these challenging times and we are grateful for your generosity. Your commitment strengthens our capacity to foster better memory care at Abe's Garden® and around the world!

Your gift will be matched by the 5th Anniversary Board of Directors Challenge, dollar for dollar, up to \$115K.

Thank you again for your incredible support.

1 Become a Monthly Donor

Set up a recurring donation on our website at abesgarden.org/givenow. Your gift can be automatically charged to your credit card each month.

2 Appreciated Stock

Transfer appreciated stock to Abe's Garden® and avoid the capital gains tax.

3

Beneficiary

Add Abe's Garden® as a beneficiary to your will, IRA, 401(k), life insurance policy or trust. Beneficiary forms are usually available online. Or, designate the remainder of a specific mutual fund, bank account or donor-advised fund to Abe's Garden®.

4

Donor-Advised Fund

Make a gift from your donor advised fund to leverage your previous charitable deduction.

5

IRA Charitable Rollover

If you are 70 ½ or older, make a direct transfer from your IRA to Abe's Garden®. You pay no federal income tax on the transfer and it counts toward your minimum required distribution. Contact your administrator.

Please include the Abe's Garden® address and Federal Tax ID Number to ensure that your wishes are carried out as you desire. Contact Donna Coleman, Senior Director, Marketing and Development, at dcoleman@abesgarden.org or **615.490.6340** for additional information.

Organization Name: Abe's Garden®
Address: 115 Woodmont Blvd., Nashville, TN 37205
Federal Tax ID Number: #06-1818302