

Connection

SUMMER/FALL 2023

Establishing a replicable model for senior life that is focused on brain health, wellness and purposeful living



Abe's Garden
Community



ROBERT A. FRIST JR. COMMISSIONS PHIL PONDER *to Capture Abe's Garden Community in Watercolor*

By Donna W. Coleman

Robert "Bobby" Frist Jr. commissioned renowned artist Phil Ponder to document Abe's Garden Community as one of Nashville's notable neighbors! A collector of Phil Ponder originals and a long-time supporter of Abe's Garden Community, Bobby is known for thinking outside the box. "What better way to highlight the impact Abe's Garden Community has on elevating care for those who have cognitive challenges — and those who care for them — than to have Phil use his artistic talent to capture its spirit."



(L to R) Mike Shmerling, Phil Ponder, and Bobby Frist Jr.

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Ponder referenced a photograph of a sunflower in order to capture all the small, scalable details.

Photo by Lori Latusek

Phil, who turned 90 this year, recently toured Abe's Garden Community and commented, "I understand firsthand the challenges of caring for someone with dementia as I am the primary caregiver for my wife. It takes love and devotion to see the person inside who is still there. I try to look on the bright side each day. I see they have that same approach at Abe's Garden Community."

Phil was thrilled to be asked to create two original watercolors to represent the Abe's Garden Community mission and honor its namesake, Abram "Abe" Shmerling, M.D., who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 1995 and passed away in 2006. Since Abe was an avid flower photographer, Phil thought it would be fitting to paint a flower that represents the essence of the mission. After looking through some of Abe's photographs and pictures of the gardens on campus, the sunflower stood out. Chosen as a symbol of optimism, longevity, honesty, and devotion, the sunflower possibly surpasses all others in terms of its power to bring joy to people who see it. Who doesn't smile when they see a sunflower? The sunflower represents the goal of each day at Abe's Garden Community — to create moments that bring joy and smiles to the residents and caregivers, and yes, even growth, as they experience the power of purposeful engagement "in the moment."

Phil completed the first commissioned piece titled *Bright Side* and will start work on the second watercolor of the Abe's Garden Community campus next year — he is a busy man! After his tour of the campus, Phil noted, "The community is nestled in the heart of Nashville. I want to capture the award-winning design and the beautiful wooded setting that surrounds it."

Mike Shmerling, Abe's son and founder and board chair of Abe's Garden Community, is humbled by Bobby's offer to engage Phil. "Bobby has been a good friend for many years, and Phil Ponder is a Nashville treasure," says Mike. "It is so fitting for our mission that Phil's career as an artist began in retirement. He is an inspiration for active aging! He certainly knows the power of living with purpose and meaning as his work has a positive impact here in Nashville and around the world — and that's exactly what Abe's Garden Community seeks to do. We consistently find ways to expand services locally and to elevate dementia care and engagement around the globe."

We invite you to see Phil Ponder's original *Bright Side* in person at Abe's Garden Community. Follow Abe's Garden Community on Facebook or contact us at news@abesgarden.org to find out when it will be on display.

ABE'S GARDEN MEMORY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Far Exceeds Average Resident Engagement Figures

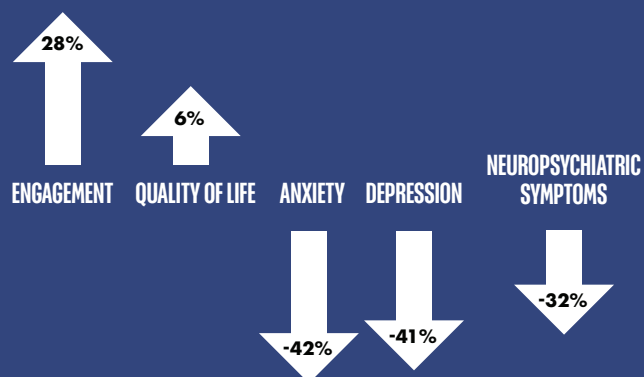
By Lori Latusek

Abe's Garden Community is setting a new standard of care for those with Alzheimer's and related dementias. Our dream is for every care provider around the globe to offer the highest quality of life for individuals living with dementia by providing opportunities for authentic engagement throughout each day.

Industry data from 2022 across skilled nursing, assisted living, and memory care indicates residents were receiving an average of 26 minutes of engagement per day.¹ We are proud to say that, at Abe's Garden Memory Support and the 40 *I'm Still Here*® Centers of Excellence around the country, people with all stages of dementia are typically engaged for 4-5 hours each day. Opportunities for participation include anything from culinary club to music lessons to exercise classes ... and so much more. Each engagement is adapted to the skills and interests of the participants using Hearthstone Institute's evidence-based methodology.

Our program is led by a specially-trained engagement team who implements the *I'm Still Here*® approach in individual and group activities throughout the day. This means our residents, home care clients, and dementia day program participants are offered quality, research-based programming 365 days a year.

THE POSITIVE EFFECT OF THE *I'M STILL HERE*® APPROACH



Boosted engagement and socialization provide a range of benefits to participants. Research studies have demonstrated that the *I'm Still Here*® approach has a statistically significant positive effect on the quality of life (6% increase), anxiety (42% decrease), depression (41% decrease), and neuropsychiatric symptoms, such as agitation and apathy (32% decrease).

The *I'm Still Here*® approach combines meaningful activities, specialized communication techniques, and an enriched environment to provide engagement, choice, and true purpose regardless of the level of cognitive challenge.

To learn more about *I'm Still Here*® or providing outcome-driven engagement, contact Sharon Johnson, Director, Hearthstone Institute at Abe's Garden, at 781.856.2952 or sjohnson@abesgarden.org.

¹ <https://www.mcknights.com/blogs/can-you-live-with-26-minutes-of-daily-engagement/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20report%2C%20long,minutes%20of%20engagement%20each%20day.>

AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT TIMES PER DAY

INDUSTRY
AVERAGE

26
MINUTES



ABE'S GARDEN
MEMORY SUPPORT AVERAGE

4-5
HOURS

Board Spotlight

PHILLIP G. BILLINGTON



Phil Billington is on the executive leadership team of HCA Healthcare as the Senior Vice President of Internal Audit Services and serves as Treasurer on the Abe's Garden Community Board of Directors. With his background in healthcare and finance, Phil was instrumental in guiding Abe's Garden Community through the COVID-19 pandemic. Phil shares insights from his first four years of board service below. Thank you, Phil!

"My grandmother was a great lady who lived to be 102. In the last years of her life, although she was in good health physically, she struggled with remembering the basic things of daily living like mealtimes and medications and even couldn't recognize family members and friends. However, she could remember detailed stories from when she was a little girl in the early 1900s and heard men who fought in the Civil War share their experiences. What amazing tales she would tell!

When I was asked to join the Abe's Garden Community Board of Directors in 2019, I jumped at the chance. I quickly learned a lot from staff, residents, and fellow board members about how Abe's Garden Community uses the principles of the Hearthstone *I'm Still Here*® approach to engage residents with dementia. Creating an environment that focuses on what a person can and likes to do allows each resident to live with dignity and purpose.

As a board member, I can see how the organization has recovered from the pandemic and is stronger than ever. We are well-positioned to help even more individuals and their families moving forward.

I'm always impressed that the staff continues to find new ways to meet the needs of those living with Alzheimer's – especially now with our new in-home services and the expansion of the dementia day program to Williamson County.

Although Abe's Garden Community was not open until after my grandmother passed away in 2000, I'm honored to be part of an organization that understands, accepts, and values older individuals – especially those with memory loss. Now I fondly remember my grandmother's stories and I'm grateful she told them over and over! I'm excited to see where Abe's Garden Community goes in the future as we help many other organizations apply the concepts of the *I'm Still Here*® approach to benefit people beyond our Nashville community."

We would love to hear how Abe's Garden Community has impacted you or someone you know. Please use this QR code to email us a note.



ABE'S GARDEN COMMUNITY *Lights Up For Research* WITH MOUNT SINAI

An Innovative Table Delivers More Daytime
Light to Memory Support Residents



By Lori Latusek

Seeking a unique approach to enhance daytime light levels for older adults living with Alzheimer's and related dementias, Mount Sinai Light and Health Research Center (LHRC) partnered with Abe's Garden Community to conduct an onsite study with volunteer memory support residents.

LHRC's general premise is that an abundance of circadian-effective light in architectural spaces promotes good health, well-being, and nighttime sleep. The pattern of bright light during the day and dim to dark light at night is essential for better sleep and to ward off physical and mental health problems. Dim environments may elevate the risk of older adults experiencing health issues. And for those living with Alzheimer's, sleep disturbances increase the challenges of the disease. It's important to have appropriately bright lights during the day for this population.

However, creating the right solution for aging eyes is typically costly and energy-inefficient. As a solution, LHRC proposed a light table as a creative – and movable – option to deliver bright light to residents.

The study, which was made possible with funding provided by the Care Foundation of America, included custom-built light tables by Dean Babin. Five tables were placed throughout the dining rooms of Abe's Garden Memory Support, where residents spend a consistent portion of each day. The customized furniture was used to test the long-term effect of exposure to circadian light on measures of sleep and mood among 13 residents with moderate



An Abe's Garden Memory Support resident sits at a light table while creating art.

Photos by Lori Latusek



to severe dementia who were experiencing sleep problems. Participating residents were periodically exposed to the light table on a voluntary basis between 6 a.m. – 6 p.m., seven days per week, over six months.

Monitoring wake/activity patterns showed that participants fell asleep faster, woke up less frequently in the night, and had better sleep efficiency. This research highlights the importance of the continual use of bright light solutions to supplement daily routines.

An article about the research was featured in *designing lighting* magazine's June 2023 issue. **For more details on this study, please use this QR code to read the final report by LHRC's Mariana Figueiro, Ph.D., and Allison Thayer.**



8 Years of

RECOGNITION, AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Abe's Garden Community is celebrating 8 years and over 120,000 residential nights since opening its doors to Memory Support residents. Here are some notable accomplishments since 2015.



In August 2023, LeadingAge Tennessee announced Abe's Garden Community received two awards. Martha Blankenship, an independent living resident since 2011, won the Grand Positive Influence award for enhancing the lives of her fellow residents. And team member Shemekia Conway was awarded LeadingAge National Care Partner and selected as the only award winner from Tennessee to be recognized at their conference in Chicago in November. Shemekia pours herself into every resident she serves and recently took the time to guide a memory support resident back to her old passion for playing the piano. The type of passion Martha and Shemekia exude drives our mission.

2015

Named "Architecture & Design, Best Stand-Alone Memory Care" by Senior Housing News



2016

Received an "Excellence in Development" Award by Urban Land Institute Nashville

2017

The Gerontologist published "Managing Person-Centered Dementia Care in an Assisted Living Facility: Staffing and Time Considerations," co-authored in conjunction with Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC), Center for Quality Aging

2018

Journal of the American Medical Directors Association published "A Quality Improvement System to Manage Feeding Assistance Care in Assisted-Living," co-authored in conjunction with VUMC, Center for Quality Aging

2018

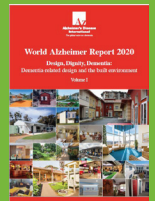
Received a Therapeutic Garden Design Award by The American Horticulture Therapy Association

2019

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society published "A System for Managing Staff and Quality of Dementia Care in Assisted Living Facilities," co-authored in conjunction with VUMC, Center for Quality Aging

2020

Recognized as a groundbreaker in dementia design in the *World Alzheimer Report 2020* and featured as 1 of 9 United States-based residential care center case studies in the report



2021

Received 6 LeadingAge Tennessee awards across 4 categories, including On The Front Lines, Innovator in Action, Distinguished Senior, and Grand Positive Influence

2022

2021

2020

Named "Best Memory Care Community Nashville" by Memorycare.com



2023

2022

2021

2020

2019

2018

2017

2016

2015

Certified as an *I'm Still Here*® Center of Excellence



Our dementia day program IS COMING SOON TO WILLIAMSON COUNTY!

ABE'S GARDEN CLUB is a day program offering those living with dementia a secure place to enjoy meaningful engagement, socialization, movement, and support. This beneficial program is offered onsite at Abe's Garden Community and will also soon be available in the Franklin area. For details or to reserve a spot, please use this QR code or contact Jaime William at jwilliam@abesgarden.org or 615.910.3789.



Staff SPOTLIGHT



JACOB PURSELL

Senior Director,
Facility Management

By Ellie Tuttle

Jacob has been an integral part of Abe's Garden Community's team since 2008 when he was hired as a maintenance technician for what was then called Park Manor, an independent living community. Over the last 15 years, Jacob's role has grown tremendously alongside the expansion of our buildings and services.

Jacob oversees campus maintenance, renovations, technology updates, and housekeeping. He constantly prioritizes tasks, making decisions on what needs immediate attention for the community to operate at optimum functionality and as smoothly and safely as possible. He is quick to stop or prevent problems that may occur, always wanting to limit the amount of downtime for residents and staff.

"There is no one who knows the campus better than

Jacob," says COO Chris Coelho. "His relationships with the team and knowledge of the building are key to keeping things running."

In his 15 years here, Jacob has witnessed new generations of residents. "It's fascinating to see the children of the initial residents now moving in," he says.

Jacob's care for the campus is matched by his compassion for residents. He says he's been loyal to the organization because it gives him purpose. He especially values being able to provide comfort to residents who may not have family nearby. "That is fulfilling to me," he smiles. "I want everyone to know they can come to me with any problem and that I will do everything in my power to keep them safe and resolve issues that arise in the buildings."

Jacob also appreciates Abe's Garden Community's mission to improve the quality of life of older adults. "I see it over and over and truly believe the care we provide extends the length of life of our residents," he says.

*Please use this QR code to
view our 2022 Annual Report*





115 Woodmont Boulevard
Nashville, TN 37205

Please use this QR code to help improve the quality of life for older adults by donating to Abe's Garden Community.



615.997.3030
www.abesgarden.org



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

LET'S GROW TOGETHER

Expanding locally to impact globally



Independent Living | Assisted Living | Memory Support

located in *the heart of Nashville*

We hear YOU! YOU have voiced the need for more assisted living and memory support suites and we are making that happen! Currently, we serve 256 families across all of our on- and off-campus services, and we look forward to helping many more.

The Abe's Garden Community team is working diligently with architects and engineers to finalize plans and pricing to expand our memory support and assisted living capacity by nearly 50%!

Watch for more details in our upcoming newsletters and special *Let's Grow Together* updates. Thank YOU for your interest, philanthropic investment and patience as we continue to meet the needs of current families while developing plans to expand locally and elevate best practices in dementia care and engagement around the globe.