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The Bluestem Post



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WELLNESS

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On the cover: Residents in a spring 2023 Bluestem U course at Kidron Bethel Village discuss a text. Bluestem Communities offers many ways for residents to stay social and active.

LIVE WELL WITH BLUESTEM COMMUNITIES

Bluestem Communities is a nonprofit organization in south central Kansas that serves seniors through various living options, care settings and care-centered services. Bluestem Communities locations include Kidron Bethel Village in North Newton, Schowalter Villa in Hesston and Bluestem PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) in McPherson and Hutchinson.

MISSION STATEMENT

Bluestem Communities' mission is to have a positive impact on quality of life by promoting lifelong wellness, purpose, choice, genuine connection and personalized care with Christian compassion.



BLUESTEM PACE
KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE
SCHOWALTER VILLA

To learn more about Bluestem Communities' services and locations visit bluestemks.org

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Lakeside Village residents Twyla White, Lois Leinbach and Mary Detweiler tie a comforter. Apartment-style living at Lakeside Village creates an atmosphere for many group events and activities. Photo by Gavin Peters Photography.

Tailoring the independent living experience

What could be better than having lunch in a restaurant every day with a group of friends, walking down the hall for a pool workout, or an unexpected afternoon conversation with a neighbor in a comfortable lounge?

It's more than just a dream for residents living at Bluestem Communities Lakeside Village Catered Independent Living neighborhood – it's reality.

The beauty of life plan communities is that they offer living options that fit a variety of personal and health needs, and offer higher levels of care as individuals journey through life – independent living, assisted living and health care.

The baseline living options are perfect for many, but sometimes people want a few more conveniences built into their everyday life. Enter catered independent living – a lesser known

living option that provides amenities and services in addition to regular independent living services to make life as convenient and comfortable as possible.

Bluestem Communities' only catered independent living neighborhood is Lakeside Village at Schowalter Villa in Hesston, which features apartment-style living along the Lake Vista waterfront and several campus amenities under the same roof.

"Lakeside Village Catered Independent Living is a unique program and living option that offers enhanced resident services to keep them independent for as long as possible," said Alex LeFevre, Catered Independent Living Manager. "The goal of the program is to enhance quality of life and provide additional resources, services and engagement to help individuals thrive. There is a certain charm and warmth that comes with living here – friendly neighbors

and everything you need under one roof."

On any given day, residents can be found enjoying each other's company at Water's Edge Restaurant and Catering for their noon meal, participating in weekly resident-led events like pinochle, dominoes and quilting, working on puzzles in the lounge, visiting one another in their homes or taking an outing into the community for an activity or sporting event at the local high school or college.

"We love the family environment at Lakeside Village," said resident Gerald Leinbach, who lives at Lakeside Village with his wife, Lois. "Residents interact frequently – sometimes planned and sometimes impromptu."

Residents living in Lakeside Village get all of the same benefits as other

continued on next page

Tailoring the independent living experience continued

independent living residents, such as maintenance-free living, membership to Bluestem Wellness Centers, and life enrichment and social activities. In addition, they get a standard package of extra services, including personalized concierge services for the little things that come up day-to-day, included utilities, a flexible dining program that includes one to two prepared meals per day at any Bluestem Communities dining location, bi-weekly housekeeping and an on-call home health nurse, as well as even more service options from an a la carte menu.

“We chose to move to Lakeside Village after living in another area of independent living for a while because we wanted the extra services like meals, housekeeping, nurse on call and a personal emergency response system to go along with our independent living lifestyle,” said Leinbach. “We have an elegant full-service restaurant, wonderful exercise room, swimming pool, hot tub, physical therapy, hair salon,

pool table, library and available transportation all in the same building in which we live!”

Lakeside Village residents Buck and Helen McClain were also drawn to the ability to relinquish even more household tasks than regular independent living would provide – particularly when it came to not needing to prepare meals regularly.

“We enjoy everything about living here - staff, meals, our beautiful home and making new friends,” said the McClains. “We have the freedom to do anything we need or wish to do, and help is available whenever we need it.”

Sometimes people confuse catered independent living with assisted living, but there are significant differences. Primarily, assisted living includes staff on-site around the clock, a full dining plan and medication administration services that aren’t available in catered independent living. Homes in Lakeside Village also include laundry appliances and a full kitchen as compared to kitchenettes in assisted living.

“People should choose catered independent living if they want life to immediately get simpler with practical support systems and the independence to choose what they want and need” said LeFevre.

For anyone who has ever witnessed the Lakeside Village crew filling multiple tables to have lunch together at the Water’s Edge Restaurant, it’s clear that they enjoy the company of their neighbors and having friends and staff to walk alongside them for whatever comes along.

“Just enjoy it; you’ve earned it,” said the McClains. “It’s the most friendly, helpful and lovely place to live.” **TBP**

Editor’s note: Lakeside Village Catered Independent Living was previously known as Lakeside Inclusive. A name change occurred with the program in the fall of 2023 in order to better explain what the program is about.



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Anita Kehr
Health Care and Assisted Living Chaplain, Schowalter Villa

Wisdom and reflection

An article by Episcopal priest Carole Johannsen ends with these words, “Regardless of common folklore, evidence shows that we do not automatically grow wise with age. Wisdom comes from the blending of knowledge and experience, seasoned with reflection and reconciliation.” (“Epiphanies of Senior Spirituality,” *Reflections*, Fall 2023.)

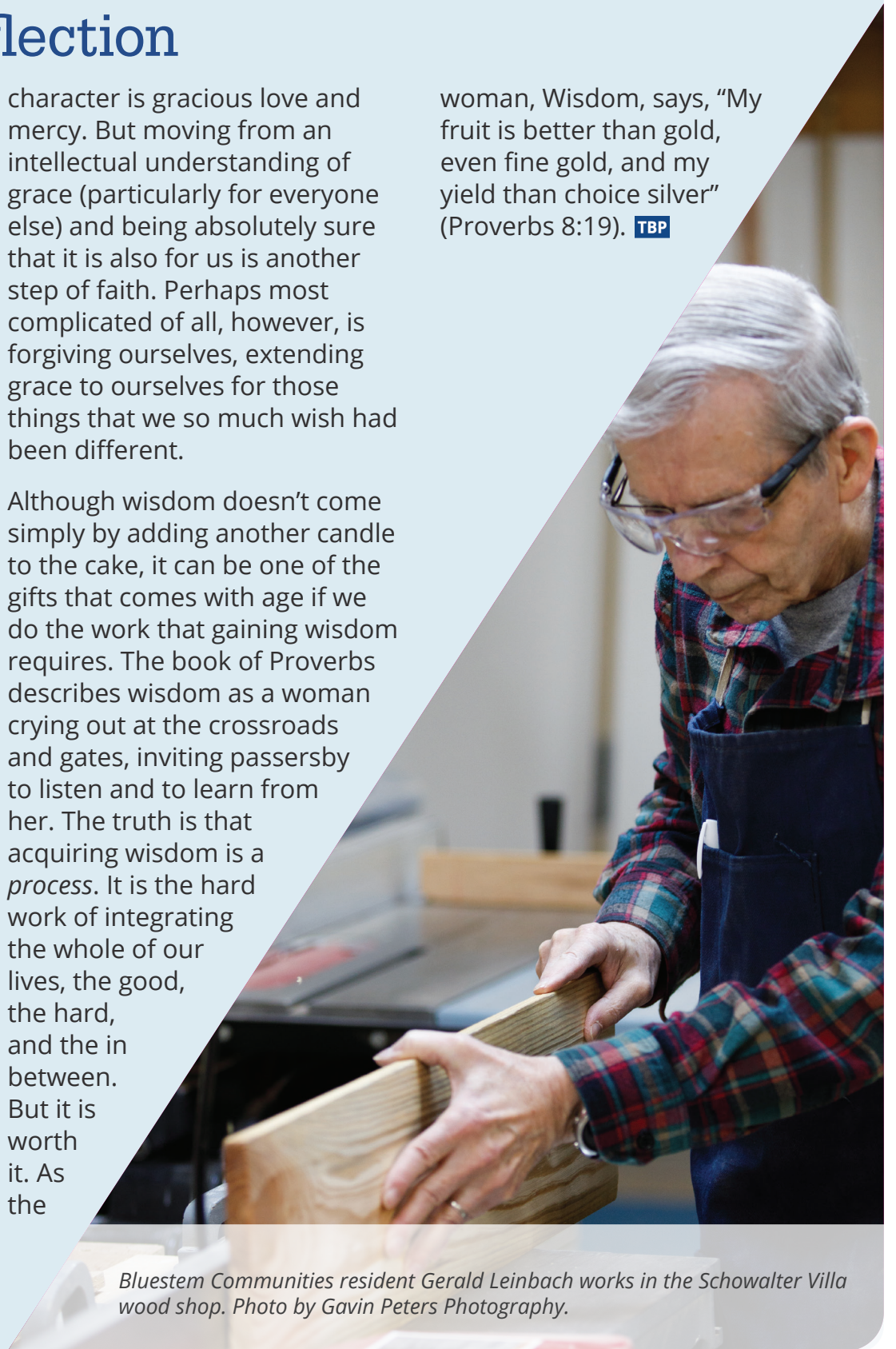
As we grow older, the work of our lives changes, but it neither ends nor is less valuable than all that has gone before it. In our senior years, we begin to engage in processes of examination: looking for what is important and letting go of what is not; reviewing our lives honestly and facing the hard things; forgiving what and who needs forgiving, including ourselves, and reconciling when possible (it’s not always); and clarifying what we hope our legacy will be—what we are proud of, how we made a difference, and what we want to pass on to those who come next. This is the work of *integration*, of coming to understand ourselves and our lives and to surround it all with grace.

For people of faith, there is an understanding that God’s

character is gracious love and mercy. But moving from an intellectual understanding of grace (particularly for everyone else) and being absolutely sure that it is also for us is another step of faith. Perhaps most complicated of all, however, is forgiving ourselves, extending grace to ourselves for those things that we so much wish had been different.

Although wisdom doesn’t come simply by adding another candle to the cake, it can be one of the gifts that comes with age if we do the work that gaining wisdom requires. The book of Proverbs describes wisdom as a woman crying out at the crossroads and gates, inviting passersby to listen and to learn from her. The truth is that acquiring wisdom is a *process*. It is the hard work of integrating the whole of our lives, the good, the hard, and the in between. But it is worth it. As the

woman, Wisdom, says, “My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver” (Proverbs 8:19). **TBP**



Bluestem Communities resident Gerald Leinbach works in the Schowalter Villa wood shop. Photo by Gavin Peters Photography.

The low-impact way to improve wellness

Aging, and any new challenges that may come with it, should never mean the end of physical activity. In fact, the aging process should be all the more reason to develop a physical activity routine.

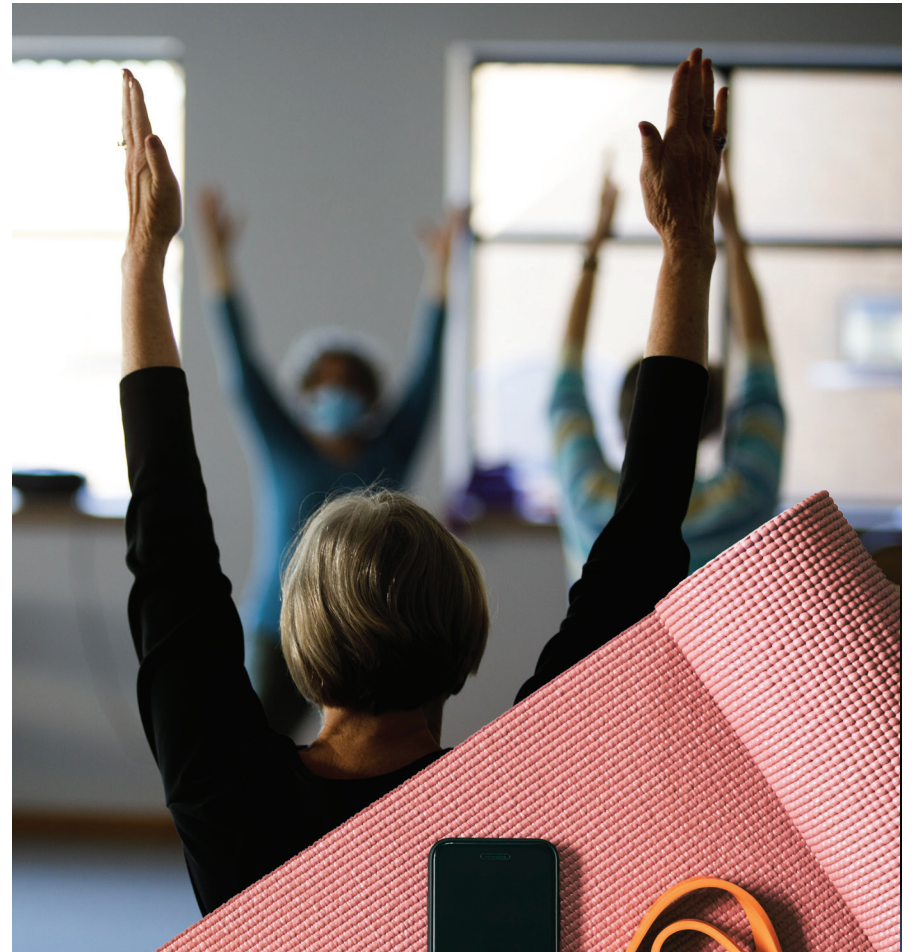
Bluestem Wellness Centers offers a variety of individual and group exercise options to boost physical activity. One highly recommended option that carries a host of wellness benefits is yoga.

Yoga offers numerous benefits for older adults, making it an excellent and accessible form for exercise. One of the key advantages is improved flexibility, as yoga involves a variety of poses that gently stretch and lengthen muscles. This increased flexibility contributes to enhanced joint health and range of motion, reducing the risk of injuries and promoting better mobility.

Yoga also promotes balance and stability, crucial factors for older adults to prevent falls and maintain independence. Many yoga poses focus on body awareness and core strength, helping older adults develop better posture and stability in their daily activities. Moreover, the practice of yoga has been linked to stress reduction and improved mental well-being. The combination of gentle movements, deep breathing and mindfulness can contribute to reduced anxiety and a sense of calm, benefitting both mental and emotional health.

Another major benefit is that yoga provides a low-impact workout, making it suitable for individuals with various physical conditions or limitations. It can be adapted to accommodate different fitness levels, allowing older adults to engage in a form of exercise that is gentle on the joints while still promoting overall health and wellness.

Bluestem Wellness Centers offer group yoga classes at both its Hesston and North Newton locations several times a week. See the group class schedules at bluestemwellness.com. **TBP**



Incorporating yoga into the routine of older adults can contribute to their physical, mental and emotional well-being, fostering a more active and fulfilling lifestyle. Photo by Gavin Peters Photography.

Welcome home to Bluestem Communities.



See available independent living home options here:
bluestemks.org/availablehomes



**KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE
SCHOWALTER VILLA**
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Holistic memory care

Cognitive changes are part of the aging process for many older adults. A 2022 study by Columbia University researchers found that “10 percent of U.S. adults ages 65 and older have dementia, while another 22 percent have mild cognitive impairment.” Rates of dementia and mild cognitive impairment rise to 35 percent for people age 90 and older.

As the numbers point out, cognitive impairment of some kind is increasingly common as people age. For life plan communities, therefore, providing top quality memory care is imperative.

WHAT IS MEMORY CARE?

Memory care is a specialized form of long-term care designed to meet the unique needs of individuals living with Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of progressive degenerative cognitive impairment. It involves providing a secure and supportive environment with staff who are knowledgeable about the challenges associated with memory loss. The goal of memory care is to enhance the quality of life

for individuals who have trouble thinking while ensuring their safety and well-being.

COMFORT MATTERS®

Bluestem Communities’ life plan campuses of Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa provide top-quality care with specialized memory care. Both locations are accredited by Comfort Matters®, an evidence-based philosophy and care practice that provides a holistic and integrated approach to improve quality of care and life for people with dementia.

Comfort Matters® is built on a foundation of five simple but powerful concepts for caring for people who live with dementia:

- Comfort care
- Anticipation of needs
- Know the person
- Person-directed practice
- Staff and family empowerment

With Comfort Matters®, people with dementia continue to be viewed as

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Residents in Schowalter Villa’s Hess Plaza, a high-functioning memory care neighborhood, make treats to deliver to the Hesston Fire and EMS teams. Photo by Amy Bisterfeldt.



A Kidron Bethel Village resident explores the interactive elements in the memory loop with a nurse. Photo by Tyler Stutzman.

DEMENTIA CARE AND MEMORY SUPPORT AT BLUESTEM COMMUNITIES

KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE

- Dementia care residents are integrated throughout health care neighborhoods.
- An indoor/outdoor memory loop is specially designed for people who have difficulty thinking to increase movement, freedom and engagement through tactile stimulation, sensory components and interactive elements.

SCHOWALTER VILLA

- Dementia care residents live in a dedicated neighborhood in health care.
- Another dedicated neighborhood, Hess Plaza, is for high-functioning individuals who need memory support. Residents who qualify as “high-functioning” are able to walk, dress, eat and do other activities independently, yet also need a safe, engaging environment to live in due to their difficulty thinking. This neighborhood is similar to assisted living memory care, but located within Schowalter Villa health care.



Shelby McCauley

Kidron Bethel Village welcomes new director of nursing

Kidron Bethel Village welcomed Shelby McCauley as Director of Nursing in November 2023. McCauley succeeds Blair Loganbill, who retired after serving Kidron Bethel Village for 11 years. McCauley came to Kidron Bethel Village from six years at Wesley Medical Center (Wichita, Kan.), where she most recently served as a nurse manager. Prior to that, she served five years in nursing at Kidron Bethel Village. McCauley completed her nursing education from Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College and Wichita (Kan.) Area Technical College. [TBP](#)

Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa recognized for excellence

Bluestem Communities' life plan communities closed out the 2023 year with a string of awards, recognitions of excellence and ongoing commitments to exemplary care.

Both Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa received the highest possible rating, "High Performing," in *U.S. News & World Report's* annual Best Nursing Homes for 2024 results. The rating considers more than 15,000 skilled nursing care providers across the country for quality measures in long-term care and short-term rehab, and 19% earn the highest rating. The ratings help equip people with information they can use to help choose the right care setting for themselves or a loved one.

Schowalter Villa's Mullet Place Assisted Living received an annual survey visit late in the year that resulted in only one low level deficiency that administrators state was easily correctable. In Kansas, surveys return an average of more than seven deficiencies per site. "We're grateful for departments that work diligently to better residents' lives and make quality of care and life a priority at Schowalter Villa," said Executive Director Jeff Ritcha. [TBP](#)

Resident donates World War I diary

On December 13, 2023, Marjorie Janzen, a resident of Kidron Bethel Village, donated a World War I diary to the Mennonite Archives. The diary, received by John Thiesen, co-director and archivist of the Mennonite Archives, was kept by Noah H. Leatherman, a conscientious objector, during his internment in the United States during World War I. Janzen received the diary from her uncle, John Klassen, who was also a conscientious objector confined by the U.S. military. [TBP](#)



Marjorie Janzen visits with John Thiesen about the diary she donated to the Mennonite Archives.

Endowment to provide quality of care for generations to come

Being a resident or participant at Bluestem Communities means peace of mind that your care and quality of life is always top of priority.

Each location has its own benevolent fund to assist residents and participants by ensuring continuation of care and services when they are unable to cover the full cost of their care due to unforeseen circumstances.

Bluestem Communities is now building an endowment, the Bluestem Legacy, to add an extra safeguard for top-quality care for residents and participants, and securing the organization's ability to live its mission well into the future.

"Bluestem Legacy is built on the foundation of providing exceptional care, a nurturing environment and a range of amenities and experiences designed to enrich the lives of residents and participants," said Derek Yoder, Bluestem Communities Vice President of Fund Advancement. "An endowment gives great strength to the organization to build a solid foundation for legacy gifts to serve residents and participants into perpetuity."

Like the benevolent funds, Bluestem Legacy has an arm at each location. It is not meant to replace the annual

benevolent funds. Rather, Yoder explains, the endowment is another layer of security for Bluestem Communities to function and serve residents and participants in the way it promises through its mission.

"Bluestem Legacy plays a pivotal role in ensuring the future of Bluestem Communities," said Yoder. "It serves as a safeguard for the evolving needs of residents and participants, allowing us to adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining our unwavering commitment to their well-being. We remain dedicated to upholding our mission, guided by the principles of compassion, dignity and respect as we continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who call this community home."

The Bluestem Legacy endowment is being built primarily through estate and individual gifts. To learn more or talk about options that fit your giving philosophy and desires, contact a member of the Bluestem Communities Fund Advancement team at 316-836-4879. [TBP](#)

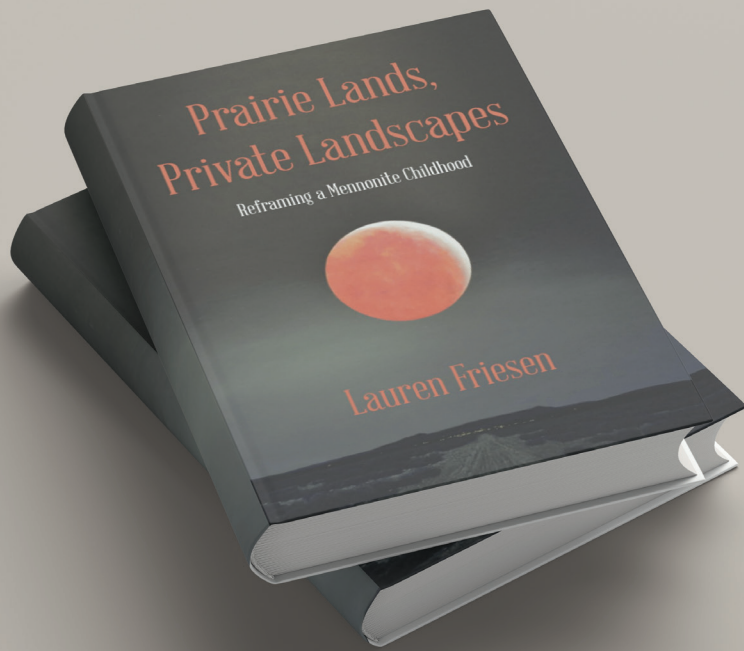
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Are you 55 and better?

Bluestem Communities has partnered with our neighbors, Bethel College and Hesston College, to offer Bluestem U, a lifelong learning experience for those age 55 and better. Join us starting March 2024 to enjoy the college experience with all of the fun but none of the homework!



Learn more and register at [BluestemU.org](https://www.bluestemu.org) or call 316-836-4846.



*Lauren Friesen wrote *Prairie Lands, Private Landscapes: Reframing a Mennonite Childhood* that explores his vocational journey into the world of theater.*

From farm to stage

To most outside observers, a farm boy from Nebraska landing in a theatre career seems like an unlikely scenario. But for Lauren Friesen, it was a natural fit, and one that was nurtured in his developmental years in his isolated, rural Mennonite community. That's why Friesen wrote *Prairie Lands, Private Landscapes: Reframing a Mennonite Childhood* (Archway Publishing, 2023).

As Friesen writes in the author's introduction to *Prairie Lands*, "If I were to enumerate what this book is not, the list would be rather extensive: not history, not a memoir, not anthropology, not biography, not documentary, not autobiography, not a family chronicle and so forth. Yet in many ways the narrative includes information that enlightens each of these areas.... It is an expedition into my life, youth and the memories located there."

Primarily, Friesen, who is a resident at Kidron Bethel Village, wanted to have a record of his life for his children and grandchildren. The writing took place over a couple of decades, starting when Friesen would travel to conferences or workshops. He would spend his downtime writing in notebooks, eventually moving to a laptop.

"Sooner or later, I had 15 or 16 essays, not just about rural life, but the question people always ask – 'How can

somebody from rural Nebraska end up in theatre?" said Friesen.

"The world of my youth was filled with oral histories," Friesen wrote. "The memories of the collective community, experiences of individuals and a common set of beliefs shaped the identities of the people who inhabited that flat corner of earth. The storyteller with the ability to deliver a narrative in a compelling manner has been a treasure for people of the land. A well-told story had greater worth than logic."

Friesen was exposed to storytelling and theatre from his earliest years by a mother who had an affinity for writing and staging plays for the church. He had involvement in all the areas of theatre through the years, from serving as a curtain-puller as a first grader, to acting to set construction. He then embarked on a 40-year career as a theatre professor at Goshen (Ind.) College and the University of Michigan (Flint and Ann Arbor).

Prairie Lands lays out a rich life and journey that illustrates how a farm boy from Nebraska can find true vocation in theatre.

"I don't approach theatre just as an entertainment idea,"

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Farm to stage continued

said Friesen. "I approach it more seriously. I believe it's a social bond that is healing in society. It's catharsis – it provides personal healing and growth."

Prairie Lands, Private Landscapes is available from the Kidron Bethel Village Welcome Center and on Amazon. Friesen will also be teaching a Bluestem U course, "Diversity in American Theater," beginning in mid-March. Register for the class at bluestemu.org. **TBP**

Holistic memory care continued

they face. By embedding comfort in both the personal approach and the organizational systems, everyone has the tools to do for the person with dementia what the person would do for themselves if they could.

In the fall of 2023, Tena Alonzo, director of Comfort Matters®, visited both Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa. During Alonzo's visit, all staff at Kidron Bethel Village received training for the program, and Schowalter Villa, who was due for re-accreditation, had its accreditation renewed. "I was so impressed with what I found at Bluestem Communities," said Alonzo. "Each resident was so comfortable and staff is attentive. The communication with families was also exactly what it should be."

While each location approaches the application of Comfort Matters® a little differently, residents living with dementia at Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa are comfortable and thriving. **TBP**



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UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

BLUESTEM U

Spring Semester begins
March 4

Register at: bluestemu.org

PRAIRIE LAKES MODEL HOME OPEN HOUSE

March 28

Schowalter Villa

PACE RACE 5K RUN/WALK

April 6

Register at: bluestemks.org/events

CRAFTS, COLLECTIBLES and HOBBY SHOW

April 25

Kidron Bethel Village

GARDEN PARTY

June 1

Hesston, Kansas

Register at: bluestemks.org/events

CAR SHOW

June 7, Kidron Bethel Village

June 15, Schowalter Villa





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The Bluestem Post is published to share information, fellowship and fun with participants, residents, staff and friends of Bluestem Communities.

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