



THE PILLARS
OF GRAND RAPIDS
SENIOR LIVING | ASSISTED LIVING | MEMORY CARE

August 2026
Vol. 5 Issue 8

Newsletter



Tiffany Johnson
Executive Director

Message from the Executive Director

Summer in Minnesota is one of the most beautiful times of the year. With warm sunshine, longer days, and plenty of opportunities to get outdoors, it's the perfect season to connect with friends, family, and our community. As you enjoy all that summer has to offer, remember a few simple tips to stay safe and healthy.

Summer Safety Tips

- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day, especially when spending time outdoors.
- **Protect Yourself from the Sun:** Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat to help prevent sunburn and heat-related illnesses.
- **Dress for the Weather:** Lightweight, breathable clothing can help keep you cool and comfortable.
- **Be Mindful of Heat:** Take breaks in the shade or air conditioning when temperatures rise, and watch for signs of heat exhaustion.
- **Practice Outdoor Safety:** Whether you're walking, gardening, or enjoying local events, wear appropriate footwear and be aware of your surroundings.

One of the best ways to celebrate the season is by spending time with friends and neighbors at our Summer on the Patio Series. We invite everyone to come together and enjoy an afternoon of great company, live music, delicious snacks, and refreshing beverages.

The Summer on the Patio Series is a wonderful opportunity to relax, soak up the beautiful weather, and connect with others in a fun and welcoming atmosphere. Whether you're there to enjoy the music, share a conversation, or simply spend time outdoors, there's something for everyone.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming patio events. Bring your summer spirit, enjoy the entertainment, and make lasting memories with our community!

CULINARY CLIPS

Chris Geirsdorf
Culinary Director

We heard you!

Residents have asked for more hotdishes. So we have added a wild rice hotdish and some other northern Minnesota hotdishes to our menus.

We hope that you enjoy them ! We are trying to have a different one every week.

Happy or Not

We have added the comment cards to the tables in the dining room. Please use them to leave your comments, good or bad. Our Servers will turn these into the Dining Services Director, Chris and enter them comments in for you to our “Happy or Not” kiosk. We want to hear your comments.



HERBS & SPICES

Consider incorporating MIND diet recommended herbs and spices to boost brain health: Cinnamon & turmeric may help support brain health & reduce inflammation.

- Ginger, clove & saffron can also decrease inflammation.
- Oregano contains antioxidants, which protect your body's cells.
- Rosemary & black pepper can improve mood.
- Sage can support memory.

Watch for copies of the Dieticians Dish at the front desk to learn more about the MIND diet approach.



Concierge Corner

Help me keep your information up to date.

Have you changed your phone number? Has a family member gotten a new cell phone or email address? Maybe someone should be added—or removed—from your contact list. If so, please stop by and let me know!

Keeping your contact information up to date helps us reach the right people when needed and keeps everything running smoothly. Think of it as giving our records a little tune-up!

As always, I'm happy to help with updates, answer questions, or lend a hand whenever you need it. My door (and my smile!) are always open.

Thank you for helping me keep our records current. Enjoy your August! 😊



Debbie Tahtinen
Concierge



Rob Vance
Maintenance Director

Maintenance Updates

First, I would like to welcome our new Maintenance Assistant, Willy! Willy is joining our team as he takes over for Dean, who recently retired. We may still see Dean around from time to time, as he has graciously volunteered to help with apartment turns whenever we need an extra hand. Since retiring, Dean has been enjoying home projects and working on his tan.

Willy brings many years of maintenance experience to our community, and I am excited to have him on our team. If you see Willy in the halls, please take a moment to say hello and help us give him a warm welcome!

With the warmer months upon us, it's the perfect time for fruit flies to make an unwanted appearance. Your maintenance department has taken steps to control them throughout the building. Luckily, a few simple habits can help keep them out of your kitchen and living space. Here are some easy tips:

Tips to Keep Fruit Flies Away

1. Store produce properly

- Keep ripe fruit in the fridge instead of on the counter.
- If you do leave fruit out, try using a fruit bowl cover or mesh dome.

2. Clean regularly

- Wipe down countertops, sinks, and trash bins often.
- Don't forget to clean up sticky spills—especially juice or anything sweet.

3. Take out the trash

- Empty your kitchen trash daily if possible.
- Make sure bins are sealed tightly to avoid attracting pests.

4. Rinse recyclables

- Wash out bottles and cans before tossing them in the recycling.

5. Keep drains clean

- Fruit flies love damp drains. Use boiling water, baking soda with vinegar, or a drain brush to keep things fresh.

If Fruit Flies Do Show Up...

1. Try a DIY fruit fly trap

- Fill a small bowl or jar with apple cider vinegar.
- Add a drop of dish soap (this breaks the surface tension).
- Cover with plastic wrap and poke small holes
- The flies will be drawn to the smell and get trapped.

2. Use store-bought traps

- You can find fruit fly traps at most grocery or hardware stores—they're usually sticky or use a safe attractant.

3. Eliminate breeding spots

- Check for forgotten produce in drawers or bags.
- Look under appliances, in pantries, and around trash cans.

Thank you all for your continued cooperation and support. If you have any questions or need assistance, don't hesitate to reach out.



Melissa Drake & Riggs

LIFE ENRICHMENT

Get Ready for Fun, Laughter & New Adventures!

At The Pillars of Grand Rapids, there's always something exciting happening—and YOU are invited to be part of it! Our Life Enrichment team is dedicated to creating meaningful, joyful, and engaging experiences for everyone. Whether you're looking to stay active, get creative, socialize, or simply relax and enjoy the moment, we have something just for you.

Start your day with Coffee & Chat in the Community Room—a perfect way to connect with friends and share a few laughs. Looking to stay active? Join us for Chair Exercise to keep your body moving and your spirits high daily in the yoga studio. Feeling lucky? Don't miss Bingo, where fun prizes and friendly competition await!

Throughout the week, we'll take you on adventures near and far with Armchair Travel, get creative with arts and crafts, and enjoy special events like Social Hour in the community room and Thirsty Thursday in the Pub. From music and movies to games and themed parties, there's always a reason to gather, smile, and make memories together.

Happening this month:

Elvis Week is 8/10-8/14. We will be having a scavenger hunt, dress up days, and fun social gathers.

Fair week will be celebrated 8/24-8/27 with a scavenger hunt, fair theme social gatherings and many other special activities.

Please see your monthly calendar for all of the special activities.

We encourage everyone to try something new, meet someone new, and most importantly—have FUN! Our activities are designed with you in mind, and we love seeing our community come together.

Don't forget about our Weekly Shopping Outings every Monday! This is a great opportunity to get out, pick up essentials, and enjoy time in the community. Please remember that spots are limited, so you must sign up in advance with Life Enrichment to reserve your seat.

If you have ideas, suggestions, or special interests you'd like to see added, please let us know—we're always happy to make our programs even more enjoyable for YOU!

Let's make this month one to remember!



Outings & Transportation Reminders

Please remember to check your monthly calendar for upcoming outings, shopping trips, dining adventures, medical transportation dates, and special events. Many of our activities have limited seating, so we encourage you to sign up as early as possible to reserve your spot!

Medical transportation is available for local medical appointments only and must be arranged in advance. If you need transportation or have questions about scheduling, please contact Melissa at 218-999-4962.

Whether you're joining us for a fun outing, a shopping trip, or a medical appointment, planning helps us ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable experience.



Jennifer Fox
Memory Care Coordinator

Moments That Matter

We are excited to highlight one of the most meaningful parts of our community life—our Monthly Family Day in Memory Care. This special event brings together residents, families, and staff to share moments of joy, connection, and togetherness in a warm and supportive environment.

What Is Family Day?

Family Day is a dedicated time each month for loved ones to join us in engaging activities designed specifically for individuals living with dementia. These gatherings may include music, crafts, themed celebrations, games, or shared meals—each thoughtfully planned to spark positive emotions and encourage meaningful interaction.

Why Family-Oriented Activities Matter

For individuals with dementia, staying connected to loved ones is incredibly important. While memory loss may affect recall, the emotional connection with family members remains strong. Family-oriented activities provide opportunities to nurture that bond in ways that feel natural and enjoyable.

Strengthening Emotional Connections: Shared experiences help residents feel comfort, love, and a sense of belonging.

- **Encouraging Positive Engagement:** Family participation increases interest and improves mood.
- **Supporting Memory Through Familiarity:** Activities tied to personal history can spark recognition and joy.
- **Reducing Anxiety and Improving Well-Being:** Interaction with loved ones promotes calm and security.
- **Creating Meaningful Moments for Families:** Provides opportunities to reconnect and create cherished memories.

Our Commitment

We are dedicated to creating a welcoming environment where families feel comfortable and included. Memory Care is not just about providing support for residents—it's about embracing the entire family journey.

We warmly invite you to join us for our next Family Day and experience firsthand the power of connection. Together, we can create moments that truly matter.

Employee of the Quarter

Jennifer Fox has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to our residents, their families, and her fellow team members. Her compassion, dedication, and resident-centered approach have always been evident, and those qualities have remained at the heart of everything she does as she has grown into her role as Memory Care Manager.

From managing the daily operations of memory care to coordinating schedules and countless responsibilities behind the scenes, Jennifer consistently goes above and beyond to ensure residents receive the highest quality of care and support.

Thank you, Jennifer, for your dedication, hard work, and the positive difference you make each and every day. Your commitment to excellence and genuine care for our residents embody the values of The Pillars, and we are grateful for all that you do.





Christina Korthas

Director of Nursing,
RN , LALD

As our needs evolve, finding the right balance of independence and support becomes essential for maintaining health and wellness. The nursing team here at The Pillars is dedicated to ensuring you have the exact level of care you need to thrive.

We invite you to consider whether you or your loved one might benefit from additional support with:

- Daily Living & Safety: Assistance with housekeeping, laundry, meal plan adjustments, routine safety checks, or the security of an emergency pendant.
- Medication Management: Peace of mind regarding timely administration, accurate dosing, and hassle-free prescription reordering.
- Clinical Access: On-site connection to our building staff, nursing team, and rounding nurse practitioners.
- If day-to-day activities are becoming more challenging, we are here to help. Please don't wait for a major event to happen.

Please reach out to me, Christina, Director of Nursing, to schedule a private conversation.

Together, we can discuss our Assisted Living program, explore what it has to offer, and outline the simple steps to begin.

Office: 218-999-4953

Email: ckorthas@greatlakesmc.com

Employee of the Month

We are thrilled to announce that Tracy Woolley has been named our July Employee of the Month! If you have walked down our halls, you have likely been greeted by Tracy's warm, bright smile.

Our residents and families constantly share how Tracy treats everyone like a member of their own family. Whether it is listening with genuine patience or bringing positive energy to a stressful day, Tracy makes our community a brighter place. We are incredibly grateful for the deep kindness and love they bring to work every single shift.

Please join us in thanking and congratulating Tracy the next time you see them!



EMPOWERED LIVING

LIFELONG LEARNING

August brings memories of new beginnings, learning, and growth. While school may look different today, it's never too late to learn something new. Keeping your mind active and staying curious can support memory, confidence, and overall well-being.

Learning doesn't have to happen in a classroom. Reading a new book, trying a hobby, sharing stories with friends, or exploring a new interest can all help keep your mind engaged. Every day presents an opportunity to discover something new and continue growing.

5 Simple Ways to Thrive This August

1. Learn Something New

Try a hobby, recipe, or skill you've never explored.

2. Read Every Day

Books, magazines, and articles help keep your mind engaged.

3. Challenge Your Brain

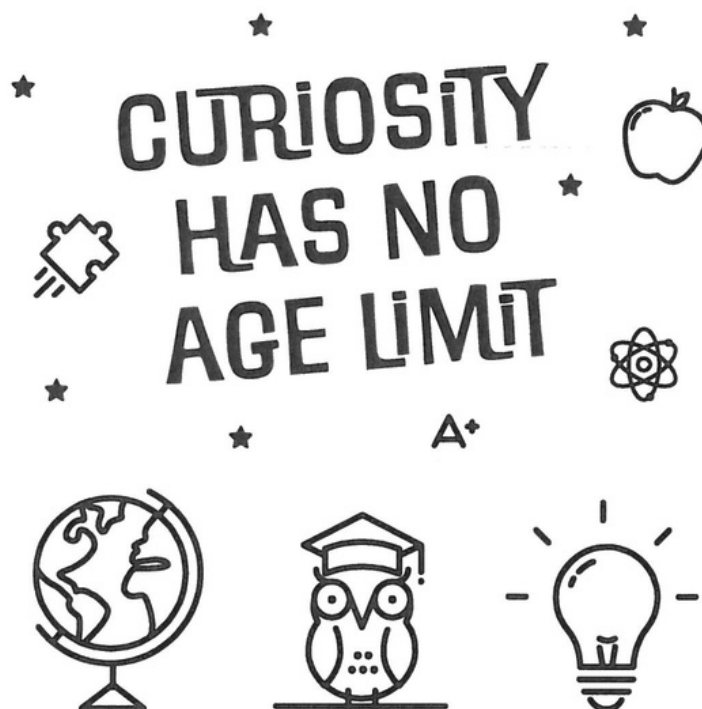
Puzzles, games, and trivia support cognitive health.

4. Share Your Knowledge

Pass along a favorite memory, skill, or life lesson.

5. Stay Curious

Ask questions and explore new interests.

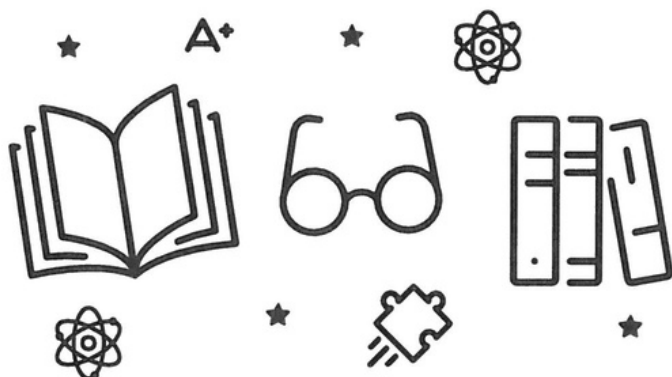


FINISH THE *Phrase!*

1. You can't judge a book by its ____.
2. Practice makes ____.
3. Better late than ____.
4. Knowledge is ____.
5. Two heads are better than ____.

To get the answers:

— Visit your EmpowerMe Wellness clinic!





Together We Walk. Together We Fight.

BURGER BASH!

GREAT
FOOD.
GREAT
CAUSE!



FREE WILL DONATION
for your burger,
served with chips
and a pickle.



**ALL PROCEEDS
GO TOWARD OUR
FUNDRAISING GOAL
FOR THE PILLARS TEAM!**



*Every bite helps
us make a
difference!*



**WEDNESDAY
AUGUST 5TH, 2026**

4:00 – 5:30 PM



**FREE WILL
DONATION**

for your burger,
served with chips
and a pickle.



EAT. ENJOY. GIVE BACK.

Thank you for supporting our team
and the fight against Alzheimer's.



**THE PILLARS
OF GRAND RAPIDS
ON THE PATIO**

Summer
CONCERT SERIES

Live Music, Great Company, Life at The Pillars.

Greg Kaczor



RAIN OR SHINE!

EVENT HELD
INDOORS IF
NEEDED.

Greg Kaczor

From the best hits of the '70s to
today's favorites, plus plenty of
timeless classics, there's something
for everyone. And yes... Johnny Cash
fans won't be disappointed!

**THURSDAY
AUGUST 13TH
3:00 - 4:00 PM**