

“Still I Rise” Event Honoring Seniors and Raising Awareness of Elder Abuse Held on Saturday, October 17th

Special to *Senior News*

On Saturday, October 17, 2015, Mending the Gap hosted its annual “Still I Rise” event at the Southeastern Railway Museum in Duluth, GA. What an unforgettable evening it was! From the start of the conference to its closing, distinguished guests and honorees received what was promised – an informative, entertaining and inspirational occasion.

The purpose of the conference was to honor seniors and shed light on the issue of elder abuse. Each year, hundreds of thousands of adults over 60 are abused, neglected or financially exploited, according to the CDC. “Still I Rise” gave us the opportunity to recognize the value that seniors bring to our communities.

Kicking off the event, guests partook in a silent auction, followed by a scenic train ride with the Southeastern Railway. We had a blast from the past as we toured the museum’s historic Pullman cars, steam locomotives, early-model typewriters and other momentous items. Adding to the vibe, we enjoyed melodious classic and jazz sounds delivered by our dynamic DJ.

We were further served a delicious meal prepared by the esteemed chef at Garden Plaza and a glass of wine from WineShop At Home.

Guest speaker David Blake, Financial Forensic Specialist at DHS, delivered an eye-opening speech on the horrors of elder abuse plus gave us tips on how to recognize and prevent it. The highlight of the evening, however, was the honoring of our seniors by the Founder of MTG, Fay Josephs, and Georgia State House Representative, Valerie Clarke. These honorees are only a few of our elderly citizens who have devoted their time and effort to serving their communities regardless of their age, disabilities and socioeconomic status – confirming that our seniors are important to the community and should be treated with care and respect.

Our honorees included: Mary Pitman, Betty Bus, Jeri Morgan, Isabella Newbold, Karen Bartley, Jean Langford and Henry Duren.

We are truly grateful to everyone who participated so that we could raise the funds needed to help support low-income seniors in Gwinnett. We could not have pulled off this event without the support of our sponsors: Kaiser Permanente, WineShop At Home and Garden Plaza/The Bridge at Lawrenceville. We would also like to thank our guest speaker, planning committee, board members, other donors and supporters; and, last but not least, our dedicated volunteers. It was truly a memorable occasion.

Mending The Gap Honorees – 2015

Mr. Henry James Duren, Jr. 87 years old.

Henry James Duren, Jr. was born in Pittsburgh, Pa. Henry's father died when he was 13 years old and at that young age he had to get a job to help provide for his family. First, it was a paper route, then a bakery in Homewood, Pa, which leads Henry to become the first African American Baker in Pittsburgh. His "rye bread" brought many repeat customers to that store. Henry continued his baking career at Sherman's Bake Shop until he became allergic to flour.

Henry graduated from Connelly Vocational High School with a diploma in electric power, then joined the U.S. Army Combat Engineers, became a drill sergeant and a demolitions instructor of his company.

Henry was an active member of Homewood AME Zion Church; he served as



Sunday school teacher, Scout Master of Troop 542 then later becoming Boy Scouts of America Neighborhood Commissioner. In his neighborhood, Plum Boro, he was also a little league "Eagle" football and soccer coach.

He is still an active member in the senior community. He became the first president of the Huntington Court Senior Residence Association, and a member of the non-denominational 130 voice Silverstone's Chorus.

He is currently an active member of First Baptist Church of Buford, Ga., where he serves as a Deacon, Sunday school Teacher, bible study leader, and a greeter.

He is a member of the Salem Alliance Civic Group and a volunteer to register new voters, and he is board member and a participant in the Senior Golden Games of Gwinnett where he won a gold medal in shot putt.

Henry is also the current President of The Suwanee Good Timers Senior Group and for the past 4 years he has been and is still the appointed designated driver in the Suwanee Day Parade for Miss Suwanee Ambassador – Miss Jeri Turk-Morgan.

Mr. Duren has truly been inspiration to us all and we honor him today.

Mrs. Betty Bus **80 years old**

Betty Bus, the 7th child in a family of 15. Betty met and married her husband Frank who passed away 4 years ago. Betty and her husband were true humanitarians. They and their 5 children spent many years as a missionary in Belgium with a Christian training organization, Operation Mobilization. She worked as part of the office team and also as the cook, laundry worker and general encourager to the mission team and to her family. She and her family lived for almost 40 years in Belgium before returning to the USA to retire.

Betty now lives in Lawrenceville, near two of her daughters and one granddaughter and enjoys her neighbors and a quiet life. However, she continues to serve others in her community.

Betty Bus takes a keen interest in her neighbors at the Lawrenceville Housing Authority. She takes daily walks around the neighborhood, visits other senior residents, checks on them to make sure that they are ok and is always ready to give a helping hand to any resident in need. She assists some of her neighbors with their paperwork, listens to their needs and concerns and offers whatever support she is able to give. Betty also works with another resident to teach crochet.

Her cheerfulness, compassion and kindness have touched many lives over the years and she continues to be a blessing to all who cross her path. When Betty is not serving others in her community, she is enjoying her favorite activity; scrabble or skyping her children and grandchildren.

Ms. Bus has inspired us through her generosity and we honor her today.



Jeraldine (Jeri) Turk-Morgan **76 years old.**

Ms. Morgan is a native of Tuskegee, Al. She grew up in Montgomery, Alabama and graduating from Booker T. Washington High School. She furthered her education and graduated from Alabama State University with a Major in Business Administration and a Minor in English. Her 1st major job was an instructor at Howard W. Blake High School, Tampa, and Florida. She taught the 7th, 9th, and 12th grades English and geography for eight years. She taught typing and shorthand to Military personnel and their dependents at MacDill Air Force Base. She also taught civilians in an after-school program for four years.

To change the scenery in her life, Jeri accepted a position as Administrative Assistant for the Tampa Urban League where she served for six years. Jeri's next stop in the employment circuit was Eastern Airlines as a Customer Service Rep for 23 years. Due to the closing of Eastern Airlines, she was forced to retire. Just before retiring, Jeri was introduced to the Performing Arts - Movies and Commercials. Jeri's 1st on-screen movie was Driving Miss Daisy, with Dan Ackroyd and Jessica Tandy, which won an Oscar for the best movie and best actress for the year. Jeri made her stage debut here in Flowery Branch, GA., with 5th Row Center in 2007 in To Kill a Mocking Bird. In 2010, Jeri was crowned Miss Suwanee Classic, during the Relay for Life. In 2011, Jeri was crowned Miss Suwanee Ambassador - for Life. In 2013, she was a contestant in the Miss Senior Georgia Pageant.

Jeri has received several awards such as Toastmaster's Best speaker of the year, and Volunteer of the Year from AARP. In 2014, she was inducted into the Century Club of AARP where she has taught more than 100 classes of Defensive and Smart Driving to keep our Citizens safe on the roads. January 2015, Jeri was recognized as one of The Promised Land Top 50 Difference Makers for 2015.

Jeri is currently an Editor for Our Town National News affiliated with New York Times and a Volunteer instructor and trainer for AARP Defensive Driving. She is also a member of GMAC (Gwinnett Multi- Cultural Advisory Committee) and the Gwinnett Council for seniors. Jeri has received 5 Presidential Gold Award Pins from President Obama for Community Service.



Karen B. Bartley **70 years old.**

Ms. Karen resides in the Applewood community senior living. When Karen moved to the Applewood community 7 years ago, she very quickly made friends due her outgoing personality. Karen also enjoys connecting with people in her church and in her community, so much so that when she found that Applewood did not have a welcoming committee for new residents, she started a program that would allow new residents to connect and communicate with other neighbors. Karen expressed that being a senior living on your own can be a very terrifying experience, especially if you are not an outgoing individual. Fortunately for the seniors in Karen's community she is determined to help her neighbors feel welcome and comfortable, and also offers support any way that



she can and eager to lend an open ear and an open heart.

Karen is also a very active member of her church; she is referred to as the senior mother. Karen has started up several ministries at her church such as a benevolence ministry about 4 years ago, and food drives once a month where her and other members of the church prepare food and deliver care packages to people in need in the community. She also started up a ministry for young college students to create care packages of things they may need before heading off to college.

Karen has been an active member of MTG for about 4 years. She serves as the client liaison for Applewood towers and MTG. She scouts those residents in need of services, and makes sure each resident signs appropriate forms and understands the protocol of each service being provided by MTG. Karen also participates in all events involving MTG by making phone calls to solicit for sponsorships and for donations.

Mary Pitman **93 years old**

Mary Pitman moved to Georgia with her husband, after her husband passed, she then moved to Applewood apartments 31 years ago.

Ms. Pitman is a veteran; she served her country in World War II, as a military secretary. Currently in Gwinnett, Ms. Pitman is the only surviving female veteran from World War II, worked alongside past presidents and other officials and at 93 years old she is still going strong.

Ms. Pitman lives alone; she has two children but due to their own illnesses and disability, they are not able to visit or assist her. Ms. Pitman however, gracefully carries out her daily tasks without complaint or worry.

Ms. Pitman is a very pleasant and loving person, who does not complain or fuss about anything. She is such a pleasure to be around.



Jean Langford **80 years old**

Jean Langford was born in in Chattanooga, TN, but has lived in GA since a small child. She worked and retired from DeKalb Medical Center after working in the Neonatal Nursery as a unit secretary for over 20 years. She continued her career in doctor's office until she became unable to work any longer. She had lost both her legs and has been a resident at Gwinnett Extended Care for over 4 years.

Despite her disability, Jean continues to play an active role among her peers. While there, she has many roles to help all residents. She has helped with mail delivery, planning events with the Activities Director, aids other residents who are in need of assistance, contributed to the recent remodeling of the outdoor garden area at the facility and overall tried to be a friend to all in her everyday life!



Isabella Newbold 68 years old

Ms. Bella born in Bronx New York, moved to Georgia 18years ago. Currently she resides at the Applewood community senior living. Bella, as everyone calls her, connects with others very easily due to her outgoing personality. Bella experienced health issues but her illnesses have not stopped her from getting involved. Her doctor told her in 2002 that she would never walk again, and was wheelchair bound since then, however, faith said differently and after 12years, (2014) she walked out of that wheelchair.

Bella participates in various programs in her community. She served as a Red Hat queen for 3years, she volunteers with Gwinnett Senior services and she is currently the treasurer for the Tenant Association at Applewood. Bella also participates in

Mending the Gap programs as a member of the Senior Advisory Board. She assists with fundraising activities and wherever she is needed. Bella never passes up an opportunity to help.



(Mending the Gap, Inc. is a 501(c3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the lives of youth and older adults through intergenerational collaboration and support. By creating opportunities for young people and senior citizens to share, collaborate, and engage in various activities. MTG also addresses the basic needs of low income seniors, by distributing food, cleaning supplies personal care items and toiletries to them each month. For more information about Mending the Gap Inc., please visit www.mending-the-gap.org or follow them at www.facebook.com/mendingthe-gap)