

Exclusive to residents of Brier Creek, Carolina Arbors and Creekside at Bethpage

Neighbors of *Brier Creek*

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Cover photo
by Bobbi Vinson

Paying It Forward for Others at Creekside

BY KATIE LENNON, CREEKSIDE AT BETHPAGE

Neighbors helping neighbors isn't a new concept, but it's one that has taken on new life in our Creekside at Bethpage active adult community.

"I've learned that people have a hard time asking for help; it's almost as if they need to be told that it's okay to accept a hand in a time of need," said Vicky Clay, a

Creekside at Bethpage homeowner and founder of the Creekside Pay It Forward initiative.

Clay knows this to be true as she was once the neighbor in need. "I'm a cancer survivor, and during my battle, I learned to ask for help and welcomed support from my network of neighbors. My experience opened my eyes to the importance of reaching out to help—to provide meals, to run errands—and I found myself offering to do that for a Creekside husband bravely navigating

his wife's terminal illness," she added. Her personal experience paved the way for the concept and creation of the Creekside Pay It Forward initiative.

Directed by our Creekside at Bethpage homeowners with over 60 volunteers, Creekside Pay It Forward is a non-profit organization that manages an informal network of resident volunteers willing to provide support, compassion, and companionship to their fellow neighbors. The organization is ready to receive requests of all types including help with pets, meal trains, computer support, hospital visits and much more. Truth be told, a neighbor can simply name a need and participating Pay It Forward members will gladly lend a hand.

"Our goal for Creekside Pay It Forward is to make life easier for neighbors. All of our board members and volunteers are vested in figuring this out to foster a broader sense of community," said Clay.

Operating informally for less than a year, the Creekside Pay It Forward is now in the process of developing rules and bylaws, establishing protocols for receiving and assigning requests and promoting the unique initiative to even more neighbors. Board Secretary / Treasurer Kevin Walls, one of Creekside at Bethpage's first homeowners, has taken on much of the research and legwork to formalize the initiative and set it up for expansion in the new year.

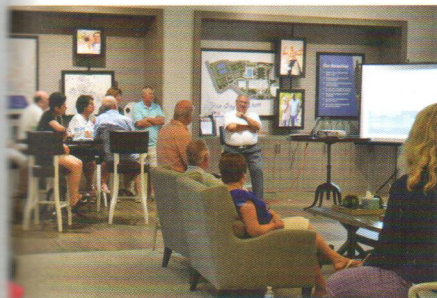
Much like Clay, Walls wants to see the grassroots movement turn into a lasting endeavor. "This is an effort that gives you a 'private smile,' a sense of satisfaction that comes from serving others. At this point, we have more people signed up to volunteer than requests coming in—that's a good problem to have," shared Walls. "We're in the process of buttoning up our organization to ensure that it is ready for that equation to flip as we grow within the Creekside community."

Community developer AV Homes Carolinas will support Creekside Pay It Forward with a yearlong sponsorship to cover the organization's insurance costs, host its meeting and events, and provide miscellaneous support as requested.

"We're proud of this Creekside at Bethpage community and the unique atmosphere we're nurturing for our active adult homeowners with our activities and events, but this special initiative was one that they started on their own, and we're happy to sponsor it," said Bill Kiselick, President of AV Homes Carolinas. "This effort is what being a neighbor is all about."

Art Krueger agrees. Krueger, the husband who Clay and others supported during his wife Flora's battle with a glioblastoma brain tumor, sentimentally shared his story of support at Creekside Pay It Forward's first formal meeting in late August. He said, "the neighborhood responded immediately and with no questions asked. I was overwhelmed by their kindness. Nowhere could I find finer neighbors than I have here."

He took the words right out of our mouths. ■



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(919) 957-0000
briercreek@anytimefitness.com
2121 TW Alexander Blvd., Morrisville