

A Publication of the Mayflower Residents Association

# The Mayflower Log



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## Mayflower assets: Jack and his staff

Jack Morrison, Mayflower's director of facilities operations, is a friendly, self-taught design architect, problem-solver and first-rate judge of character. Just as importantly, he is kind, loyal and highly creative. He and his 14 staff members seem to work wonders as they skillfully renovate our living spaces, delight us with the gardens that surround us, respond quickly to problems with the operation of our homes, and keep our physical environment and ourselves safe.

Jack's story begins when he was born in Fremont, Neb. and adopted by William and Lorene Morrison. When he was 7, the family moved to a farm southeast of Grinnell. After several years of farming, the family moved into Grinnell.

Jack began his career in 10th grade working at a local furniture-floor covering store (Milburn's Furniture). He remained there for 13 years, which tells you something about his loyalty and persistence. He eventually changed jobs to join the old Brenton Bank in the maintenance department.



**Jack Morrison**

In June 1984, Jack was hired to work in the Facilities Operations Department at Mayflower. His supervisor was Ted Mokricky, who was then Mayflower's associate director. At that time, Mayflower was contracted to provide two employees part-time to provide maintenance and grounds keeping for Grinnell Area Housing (GAH). GAH is a non-profit organization funded by FHA and HUD monies that were used to build six apartment complexes to house Grinnell's low-income elderly residents. Jack supervised the small crew.

Working at both Mayflower and GAH was an eye-opener for Jack. "It was like two different universes," he said. GAH apartments all had identical floor plans and were finished with inexpensive materials. The opposite was true at Mayflower, where designs for living spaces varied greatly, and high-quality finishing materials were standard.

Jack became director of facilities operations in 1988. Soon after taking the title, Jack remembers

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## Mayflower welcomes new residents



STRICKLER, Gayle (\* Lois)



STRICKLER, Lois (\* Gayle)



SWANN, Stan (\* Janaan)



SWANN, Janaan (\* Stan)

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## Morrison

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approaching Ted Mokricky to suggest that the facilities staff be used to do work that was being done by outside firms. This change was made, and it improved quality, controlled waiting time for residents and saved precious money for other things.

When the planning for Harwich Terrace triplexes and duplexes started, Jack immersed himself in learning all he could about how to do this well, and he soaked up ideas from Mokricky's wife, Kathy, who was an interior decorator. He built himself an architect's drawing board and taught himself how to draw accurate blueprints. At first, Jack would hand-draw about three pages of blueprints and write about six pages of construction specifications for each project. These days, Jack uses a professional architect's drafting computer and software programs that generate about 15 pages of blueprints and 60 pages of specifications and details per project.

As a matter of Mayflower policy, Jack's staff modernizes apartments and Harwich Terrace homes when ownership changes. Such updates may include opening up kitchens, replacing fluorescent lighting with LED lighting, and offering modern touches like staggered kitchen cupboards. Often, Jack's building plans include something that reveals his creativity. For my apartment, all of which I love, he included an elegant curve in the ceiling between the kitchen and living room that just delights me.

Jack is in charge of hiring for his department. He is enormously proud of his staff, and turnover is very low. Some staff members have been here for their entire working lives, and some grown children of current staff also work here. Jack said that when he is hiring, he's not necessarily looking for people with lots of experience because he expects his staff to train new people.

The successful employee, Jack reports, is one who is friendly, kind and likes the people who live here and the people he works with. I'm sure all of us would agree that current facilities staff members certainly meet those requirements. Jack notes that a few employees have left for other opportunities but some return for the comfort and joy they get working among and for people they like.



**Jack Morrison (center) is flanked by his supervising staff: (from left) Rita McVey, Ben Pearce, Tracy Sadler and Erin Gersdorf. Together, they have more than 100 years of employment at Mayflower.**

Jack has divided up his staff under four supervisors: Erin Gersdorf (20-year veteran and senior supervisor) manages day-to-day facilities operations and safety for all independent living spaces, and substitutes for Jack when he's gone; Tracy Sadler (30 years) supervises facilities operations and safety in the Health Center and Beebe; Ben Pearce (21 years) supervises the care of grounds and gardens all over our six-block campus. Jack and his new assistant, Rita McVey, are "in charge of paperwork," although we know it's a lot more than that. Jack wants you to know that "any success I have had is the result of great people doing their jobs day in and day out."

The only thing that exceeds Jack's devotion to Mayflower is his great love of his family. He and his wife, Jackie, have three daughters and seven grandchildren that Jack says, "are my life." In his office, he has framed photographs of the seven, who range in age from 4 to 14 years. He told me each of their names and one thing about them that he especially treasures. One of his daughters recently remarried and brought four more children into the group. Jack is already loving them as well.

Here's the good news! When Jack retires, he and Jackie will live at Mayflower, and he hopes to continue working here part-time because he cares about us and his work and he's terrific at both.

*Alice Breemer*

## What's in these names?

*A home is not a mere transient shelter. Its essence lies in its permanence, in its quality of representing in all of its details the personalities of the people who live in it.*"

This quotation from H. L. Mencken appears in *A Journey in Faith: The Story of Mayflower Home*. Char Ewan gave me a copy, for which I thank her. Much of the following information comes from that book. Bob Mann, Ed Poush and Dorrie Lalonde at the Drake Community Library also contributed valuable details.

The story of the Mayflower and its buildings begins around 1950, when Dr. Royal J. Montgomery told his neighbors Al and Dorothy Pinder about his plans to build a retirement home that was something other than "a place to sit and rock."

In a 1993 edition of the *Grinnell Herald Register*, Al Pinder recalls the day when he and "Monty" were watching their wives water the gardens and "Dr. Montgomery told us that he [and his wife Margaret] had sold [their] home and [were] going to use the funds to start a retirement project." In 1953, **Montgomery Hall** was dedicated.

"Monty" was a widely-known and respected Congregational minister who served as superintendent of the Iowa Conference of Congregational Churches. He and Margaret, a home economist who had taught at Kansas State College, understood that many Congregational ministers had lived most of their lives in church-owned houses and would need a place to retire. They traveled all over Iowa recruiting residents for what would become the Mayflower Home. When they got five commitments in one day, "Monty hopped into his car and sang the doxology."

**Edwards Hall** was dedicated on June 12, 1955, only two years after Montgomery Hall. (Note: We are being encouraged to use the term "building" instead of "hall," which sounds a bit institutional.) Edwards was financed by

Dora Whitney Edwards, a member of the First Congregational Church in Waterloo. After hearing Dr. Montgomery speak at her church, she changed her will to give approximately \$137,000 to the Mayflower, and Mayflower trustees began the construction of Unit II, named for Mrs. Edwards and her family.



Allie E. Pearson of Miles, Iowa, asked that his donation be used to honor his parents.

In 1955, Allie E. Pearson of Miles, Iowa, visited his friend Julia Skiles, who lived in Montgomery. Impressed by her apartment, Mr. Pearson contributed \$96,000 to the Mayflower, which led to plans for Unit III. When Dr. Montgomery asked Mr. Pearson if he would lend the Mayflower an additional \$100,000, he replied, "I'd rather give \$100,000." He requested that the new building be called **Pearson Hall**, in his parents' memory.

The waiting list grew, and the board of directors, with Harris Stafford as executive director, began to consider still another building. Dr. Montgomery asked two sisters, Helen T. Buckley and Mary Buckley Alderson, of

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## Introducing Ariel

*(June 16) It's challenging to write an introductory article on someone I've never seen. I wasn't able to meet Ariel before she left Grinnell for a brief trip home after her graduation. We made phone contact and had a nice conversation on June 15. Still, I'm missing the facial expressions and the body language that are so important to communications. I can't wait to put a physical presence with the voice I heard on June 15, when she returns to Grinnell on June 20. — Alice Breemer*

Ariel Lepito is a 2017 graduate of Grinnell College who started in June on a one-year internship in Grinnell. Of her work week, she works 10 hours at Mayflower and the rest at Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA). As part of the internship, she lives at Mayflower, in Altemeier.



**Ariel Lepito**

Ariel came to Grinnell College from Avon, Connecticut. She chose Grinnell because of its reputation and because she wanted to experience living in another part of the country. (Her younger sister followed Ariel's plan and is currently a student at Beloit College in Wisconsin.) Ariel majored in anthropology. She plans to work in some aspect of social justice.

At Mayflower, Ariel is teaming up with Anne Sunday working on activities for residents. At MICA, Ariel will be working with AmeriCorps' VISTA program. Her jobs include organizing volunteers for the summer reading program for school-age children. She also works in the MICA office doing a variety of clerical jobs.

*Alice Breemer*



**With the help of a bequest from two sisters in Strawberry Point, Buckley was dedicated in 1963.**

## Buildings

*(Continued from page 3)*

Strawberry Point, to make a bequest of approximately \$127,000 toward the \$800,000 building. Buckley Hall was dedicated in 1963.

Florence E. Altemeier lived in Apartment 101 in Buckley for a number of years. She was originally from Newton, where she had been involved in the church, the hospital and the community. At the Mayflower, many people knew her as the mail person. While here, she gave the family farm to the Mayflower. She bequeathed the rest of her estate to the Mayflower at her death.

Miss Altemeier was somewhat reluctant to have the fourth unit named in her honor, but eventually agreed, and **Altemeier Hall** was dedicated in 1975.

**Beebe** is the only Mayflower building not named for a donor (excluding Harwich Terrace and Watertower Square). In 1983, Mayflower residents pledged and received more than \$200,000 toward the \$650,000 goal.

Ralph and Mae Beebe had moved to the Mayflower in 1958. Many knew and admired Ralph, a retired UCC minister who was named

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## Welcome Lois and Gayle Strickler

Gayle and Lois Strickler are still in the process of settling into their charming duplex at 916 First Avenue. They are arranging furniture and deciding where to hang their art work. They are quite happy to be here and glad to shed some prior responsibilities, especially yard work, which doesn't agree with Gayle's back.

This couple met at Yellowstone National Park where they were both working during the summer between their junior and senior years in college. Gayle was in seminary at Pacific University in Oregon and Lois attended McPherson College in Kansas. They were married after they graduated. Then, after spending a couple of months in Idaho working at the UCC campground, it was off to New York City for Gayle to attend Union Theological Seminary.

Lois and Gayle quickly named off the states where they have lived. The states include Idaho, New York, Kansas, Texas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa. And that did not include states Gayle lived in growing up as a PK (preacher's kid). Some of his early years were on two different Hawaiian Islands, Lanai and Kauai. Lois, on the other hand, grew up on a farm in Guthrie County near Panora, Iowa. While they lived in Texas, Gayle left the ministry and earned a master's degree in social work at the University of Nebraska. Thereafter, he worked as a clinical social worker. He also taught at Minot State College for two

years. Lois was employed as a secretary in a variety of businesses and she also worked as a contract typist for a mental health clinic. She finished her career at the Iowa Veterans Home doing medical transcription.

Gayle and Lois have two daughters. One lives in Algona, Iowa, where she is the public library director. Their other daughter lives in the San Francisco Bay area, where she works in software at the Pixar Company.

It turns out that these transplants from Marshalltown, especially Gayle, know a great deal about Mayflower Community. Gayle's father was a resident here and was highly regarded. That is enabling them to get to know many residents and staff. Gayle had also served on Mayflower's Board of Trustees where, at one point, he served a term as president.

Both Gayle and Lois have pursued some unique interests. Gayle loves hot-air balloons and at one time worked as a crew member at balloon racing sites, filling the giant structures while they were still on the ground. He even had his own balloon for a couple of years. Lois collects rabbits—the ceramic and wooden kind. She has so many that she can't display them all at the same time.

*Alice Breemer*

## Buildings

*(Continued from page 4)*

Grinnell's "Outstanding Senior Citizen" in 1972. He also played a good game of pool. No one wanted to call the new building the "Residential Care Facility," and so, ultimately, the second story of what was



**Beebe was named for Ralph Beebe, a Mayflower resident.**

then the Health Center was named for Ralph.

Montgomery, Edwards, Pearson, Buckley, Altemeier, Beebe—these familiar names belonged to generous, caring people. We honor them with buildings that bear their names.

*Betty Moffett*

## Welcome Janaan and Stan Swann

Be prepared for easy conversation and plenty of laughter when you visit with Janaan and Stan Swann, who moved to Mayflower in June from Aurora, Colo.

**FYI:** Mayflower's Orlan Mitchell is the Swanns' brother-in-law. (Janaan and Verlene Mitchell are sisters.) Imagine the good-natured banter that is exchanged when that family talks! The Swanns are staying with the Mitchells until renovations of their Harwich Terrace home at 628 Park St. are completed.

Janaan and Verlene grew up in Eldora, part of a family of six children. Janaan attended Iowa State University for a year, then finished at the American Institute of Business in Des Moines. She worked initially for Sunray DX Oil Company in Waterloo. When she and two friends decided they wanted to see the world, they moved to Denver. ("I suggested going to Minneapolis, but they wanted to go to Denver, so we ended up in Denver.") Until she retired, she worked in human resources for a variety of businesses.

Stan was born in St. Paul, Minn., but moved with his family to Denver when he was 2. "It was a little dirt town then," he recalled. In his working life he had a business that refurbished commercial furniture such as desks and file cabinets using the electrostatic coating process.

The couple met through mutual friends in Denver

and has been married 27 years. Noting that it is the second marriage for both of them, Janaan said, "We're a good match. It's better this time around." Stan has a son living in Arvada, Colo.

The Swanns enjoyed Denver but were ready for a change. They are looking forward to Grinnell's conveniences and slower pace. "We told our friends in Denver that we will be five minutes from the post office and the bank, and only a little longer to doctors and the hospital," Stan said. "They couldn't believe it."

Look for the Swanns walking around town as well as on the Mayflower campus. They like the outdoors and enjoy being active. They checked out Mayflower's Fitness Center in their first week here and expect to take advantage of the facility.

They know they will miss things about Denver. Stan mentioned friends, some of whom he has known since grade school. For Janaan, it will be the mountains. In addition to their beauty, "the mountains gave me a sense of direction," she said. "Here I'm never sure."

Both Stan and Janaan are sports fans and will also miss Denver's professional sports teams. They are both avid Denver Broncos fans and have already connected with Frank Blazek, who moved to Mayflower last year from Pueblo, Colo., and also follows the Broncos.

*Mary Schuchmann*

## NAME GAME

Remember when you could pronounce and spell everybody's first name? How times have changed!

These days, parents seek out distinctive names for their offspring. If they choose a popular name, they often find an alternative spelling. How

would you like to be a teacher in today's classrooms?

A look at the most common first names

at Mayflower shows that the names are simple—and common. In naming us, our parents were not very original.

### What are the most common first names at Mayflower?

In 1937, the year that an 80-year-old Mayflower resident was born, the

most common baby name for a girl was Mary. For boys, Robert was the most popular choice in 1937.

Among current Mayflower residents, the most common first names for

women are **Mary** and **Dorothy** (tied with 6 each). The most common first names for men are **Robert** and **John** (5).

The other common female names at Mayflower are Nancy (5) and Phyllis (4). For men, second in popularity is James (4).

*Mary Schuchmann*

## COLUMBUS JUNCTION

# Lesson in community inclusion

With immigration and inclusion such contentious issues in our nation, a group of Mayflower residents set off on April 25 to visit the town of Columbus Junction, Iowa, a community that has what may be the highest percentage of immigrants of any other Iowa town.

The Mayflower group was interested in understanding how this town of 2,000 has welcomed and included several waves of immigrants. And how in the process the town has gained a vibrant and busy downtown, with restaurants, car dealerships, insurance agents, and accountants all owned and staffed by residents of various ethnic groups.

A panel discussion featured five people actively involved in the work of inclusion: the mayor, community development director, county director for the ISU extension program, a Mexican immigrant who came to the US to access an education that was denied her in her homeland, and a Burmese pastor whose Chin ethnic group came to the US to escape violence and religious intolerance.

The discussion revealed many facts about how this small town welcomes people of very different origins. A nearby Tyson pork plant provides employment for 1,000 people in the area. The company provides translators for medical and pharmacy appointments as well as financial support for citizenship. The community college provides ESL classes at many different levels. Churches provide space for day-care, for WIC, for a clothes closet, and for worship spaces for the Burmese Chin community.

Overall, people focus on working with partners to solve problems. Every month, a group gathers at a roundtable seeking to discover and resolve any difficulties. For example, at one roundtable participants mentioned that some of the immigrant women had no trans-



**A group of Mayflower residents enjoy lunch at a Burmese restaurant in Columbus Junction, a town of 2,000 about 45 minutes south of Iowa City.**

**The panelists emphasized that welcoming people is a community responsibility.**

portation to doctor's appointments, since their husbands drove the car to work and they often had young children at home. After the discussion, a group of women from one church volunteered to drive the women to appointments, and the county extension director secured car seats for their cars. So the group, working together, found a solution to the problem.

Columbus Junction has some attributes that help inclusion. For one thing, housing tends not to be segregated by income; long-time residents live near immigrants. The physical proximity helps them get to know each other. In addition, the newer town residents are young and have added many children to the local schools, which are thriving and have provided ESL education for the children. Several of the immigrant groups have brought with them superior soccer skills, and the town unites in cheering on the very successful high school team.

Columbus Junction is not a point of official refugee resettlement nationally, but as more people move there, their relatives tend to

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*Photos in this issue by Luther  
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## Trip

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follow. The town has long been home to Hispanic people who traveled to the area originally as farm workers. Now there are Hispanic families who have lived in the community for four or five generations. Many of the more recent Burmese immigrants were originally resettled in Indianapolis, which also has a nearby Tyson plant. When these refugees discovered that they could get a job at another Tyson plant and live in a welcoming small town with others from their ethnic group, they began to move to Columbus Junction. In addition, they were attracted because the area is the home of an early 1900s missionary, the Rev. Carson, who went to Burma and converted many in this

ethnic group to Christianity.

The panelists emphasized that welcoming people is a community responsibility. In this view, resettlement is the job of everyone. Asked about naysayers who object to the presence of so many newcomers, the panelists said, "We overwhelm them."

After the panel discussion, the Mayflower group divided up to eat in two downtown restaurants—one Mexican and one Burmese. In addition, several visited a Mexican bakery and some made purchases at an Oriental food store. Several intrepid Mayflower residents also risked a walk on the swinging bridge (also known as Lovers Leap Bridge), another Columbus Junction attraction. But it was the hard work and joy of community inclusion



**Chris Hunter tries out the  
historic 1922 swinging bridge  
in Columbus Junction.**

that impressed most residents on this interesting trip.

*Judy Hunter*