

Brookdale Senior Living Solutions Newsroom

Four High School Best Friends Living in Same Senior Living Community

From classmates to neighbors at Brookdale Niles

NILES, Ill., Aug. 2, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- The first Sunday of August is "National Friendship Day" and for four special friends at Brookdale Niles, they will be celebrating more than seven decades of friendship on that day. The 91-year old friends: Rochelle Schpak, Florence Burgher, Phyllis Dubow and Eileen Kritzman have remained close from their classroom days at Theodore Roosevelt High School in the 1940s, to now, as neighbors on the seventh floor of their senior living community.

It started when the ladies were in high school; they formed a club, or what they called a "sorority," that included a secret language. They nicknamed themselves the "Nago Nagams," which stands for "No Names" in their special language. After high school, they remained friends through marriages, weddings, children and family losses. "We were there for each other all through life," said Rochelle. When Phyllis got married, Eileen served as her maid of honor. And Eileen returned the honor by serving as Phyllis' maid of honor, even wearing the same dress.



The group of ladies would gather at least once a month, husbands included, for "meetings." At one point, their sorority included more than just their four families; they grew to the size of almost 12 couples. During that time, they all still lived in small-sized apartments so the women would gather in one apartment and send the men to the other.

"Can you imagine what it took to cook dinner for 12 families each month?" exclaimed Florence. "Sometimes there were 24 for dinner and sometimes there were two. We did the best we could to spend time together in those days."

Florence was the first to move into Brookdale Niles, an independent living community, followed by Phyllis. Rochelle was next, but says that she splits her time between Illinois and Arizona, where her other daughter lives. A little over a year ago, Eileen joined her friends on the seventh floor.

Now, all widows and living in their own apartments at Brookdale Niles, the women still spend their time together regularly. They enjoy dining together and participating in the many community events and activities each day. Rochelle said, even now, they have "lots of laughter and tears together."

When asked what their secret was to staying friends for 74 years, the ladies all agreed, "You gotta like each other!"

About Brookdale

Brookdale Senior Living Inc. is the leading operator of senior living communities throughout the United States. The Company is committed to providing senior living solutions primarily within properties that are designed, purpose-built and operated to provide the highest-quality service, care and living accommodations for residents. Brookdale operates independent living, assisted living, and dementia-care communities and continuing care retirement centers, with approximately 1,052 communities in 47 states and the ability to serve approximately 103,000 residents as of March 31, 2017. Through its ancillary services program, the Company also offers a range of outpatient therapy, home health and hospice services.

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