

# Merica House Moments

## First Person Account: "No Glove, No Glory"

by Cathy Parr, as told to Fred Day

The story is told of the late Willie McCool, pilot of the space shuttle *Columbia* that disintegrated in flight on February 1, 2003 while returning from a scientific research mission in outer space. While stationed with the U.S. Navy at Whidbey Island in Washington State, McCool held season tickets to attend Seattle Mariners baseball games at King County Stadium.

McCool's seats were high above the playing field at the cavernous Kingdome, well out of reach of even the most powerful sluggers. Nonetheless, Willie would always bring his baseball glove to the games, ever hopeful of catching a ball on the fly. As he would say, "You never know."

Commander McCool was right on two counts:

*first*, always bring your glove to a baseball game because, *second*, you never know.

I don't have many regrets in life. My time on this earth has been special. But I do regret not bringing my baseball glove with me when I attended the Savannah Bananas-Kansas City Firefighters baseball game at Nationals Park on Friday, June 27. My seats at the Park were impossibly high, way out of reach of any batted ball. Common sense dictated that I leave my baseball glove at home. Even so, I should have known better. I should have followed Willie McCool's example.

Speaking now, with the wisdom that comes from experience, I know that a raucous party on the center field plaza precedes each Bananas game at Nats Park. The party (*Continued on Page 3*)



Summer 2025

### Our Mission

The Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc. (APD) is a non-profit organization committed to creating accessible and affordable housing opportunities with full-time personal assistance services for adults with severe physical disabilities.

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## Things I Noticed When I Slowed Down

by Fred Day

*Slow down you move too fast, you got to make the morning last.*  
— Simon & Garfunkel, "The 59th Street Bridge Song"

Sunday, August 31, 2025; 11:50 a.m., Skyline Plaza, Home to Merica House

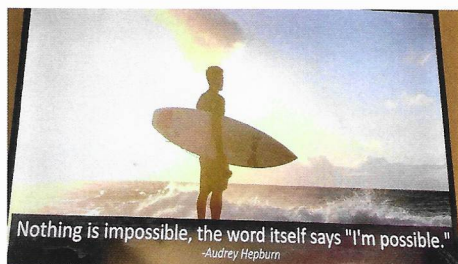
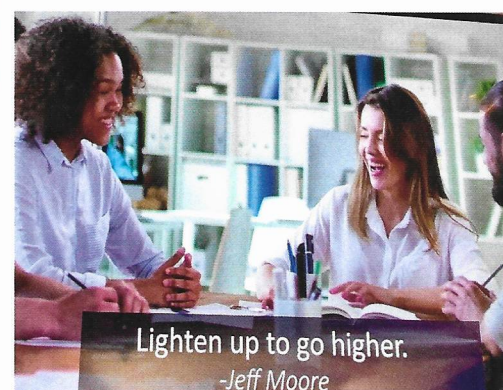
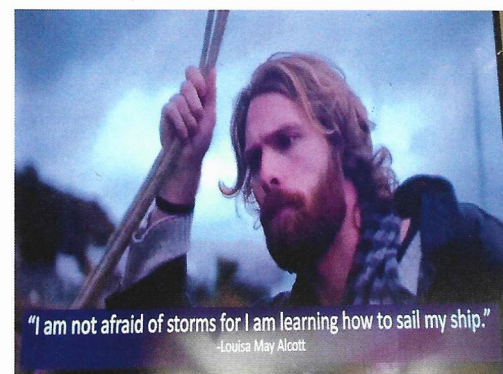
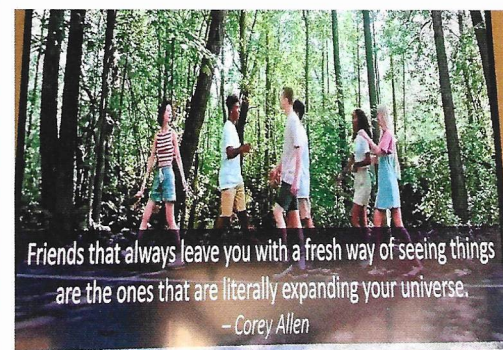
Years ago, at a moment when I was in an obvious hurry, I passed by a friend in the narrow hallway of a building. I nodded quickly to her, taking no time for pleasantries. "Man on a mission!" my friend exclaimed as I rushed by. It wasn't a criticism, just an observation. The implicit message: maybe slow down, maybe take in more of the moment, maybe enjoy the beauty of a friendly face.

Today at Skyline Plaza, walking slowly and taking my time, I encountered sights that were truly worth taking note of. In the Merica House family room, residents Deirdre Shields, Cathy Parr and Matt Renfro were gathered around the big screen TV watching a cooking show. Matt, wearing his Savannah Bananas jersey, cut a handsome figure. Deirdre was her typically radiant and exuberant self. Cathy was dressed in classic summer attire, as if poised to go on a picnic. It was a fun day to be at Merica House, a delightful day to visit with the residents.

After departing Merica House, I passed beneath the large video message board that overlooks the entrance to Skyline Plaza's South Tower. Over the years, I have passed by this video board more times than I can count. I rarely take notice. Today I paused to watch and learn. There was novelist and poet Louisa May Alcott telling viewers, "I am not afraid of storms for I am learning how to sail my ship." There was guidance from Professor Jeff Moore, who advises, "Lighten up to go higher."

The rotating images included, as well, the words of actress Audrey Hepburn, "Nothing is impossible, the word itself says 'I'm possible'." There was a photograph of a young mother in a baking session with her two children, the mother's nose dotted with white frosting, accompanied by a quote from author and educator Angela Schwindt: "While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about."

And so the question: What is life all about? Is it about letting some frosting linger on one's nose for the amusement of children? I think so. Is it about learning to sail one's ship? Louisa May Alcott would certainly say "yes" to that. Is it about enjoying the camaraderie of friends while watching a cooking show? Cathy, Deirdre and Matt definitely think so. Is it about slowing down to make the morning last? My friend in the hallway would surely agree with Simon and Garfunkel on that one.



## Deirdre's Report: The Games I Play

I marvel at the scope of interactive games that are available on the Internet. I have become fascinated with *Animal Games for Kids: The Sound Game*. It's more difficult than one might think. The computer produces a sound. You have to guess what animal makes the sound. Sure, the farm animals are easy to identify. But when you get to the jungle and ocean habitats, it becomes much more difficult. In addition to amusement, these games help to educate. I learned that frogs croak louder when it is about to rain. Who knew? I also play computerized Tic-Tac-Toe games. Tic-Tac-Toe can be played by one person or two. Both are quite challenging!



## "No Glove, No Glory" (Continued from Page 1)

features abundant food, endless music, balloons everywhere, and actual ballplayers hitting lightweight Banana balls into the crowd.

So there I was, two hours before game time, grooving to the music and watching the antics of the Bananas players on the plaza when a batted ball came barreling in my direction. Without my glove, I had no chance — the ball bounced off my right shoulder. With glove in hand, I would have had the opportunity to make a circus catch. Sadly, there would be no circus catch and no heroics — only a fun memory.

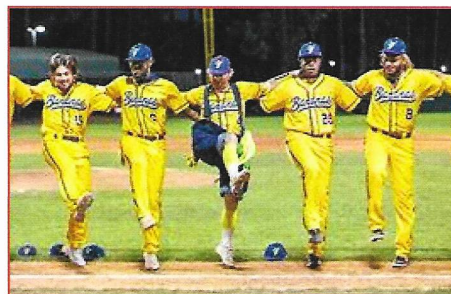
Watching the Bananas game was a delight. I found myself laughing about 12 times per inning, equating to roughly 108 laughs over the nine innings. I estimate that the antics of the Bananas were responsible for about 80% of these laughs, the Firefighters for roughly 20%, and so, by my metrics, the Bananas won in a rout. The Bananas will return to Nats Park next summer. I'll be there - with glove in hand because, as Willie McCool would say, "You never know."



*Cathy and aide Francis Rogers with Bananas ballplayer*



*Display of player autographs Cathy collected on her jersey*



*The Dancing Bananas*

## America House Gourmet

For this issue, we feature a recipe provided by board member Christine Metz. Chris leans heavily on her Beef-and-Butternut Squash Chili during chilly autumn evenings. She terms the chili her "power food" because it is loaded with zinc and vitamins B and C. The butternut squash provides a welcome dose of beta-carotene, a potent antioxidant that benefits brain, skin, lung, and heart health. The combination of vitamins helps to boost energy levels, increase alertness, and ward off winter colds.

### Beef-and-Butternut Squash Chili

#### Ingredients

- 1 pound extra-lean ground beef
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans Mexican-style stewed tomatoes, chopped
- 1 (16 ounce) can chili beans
- ½ small butternut squash, peeled & cubed (about 1½ cups)
- 1 cup low-sodium beef broth
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
- 1½ teaspoons chili powder
- 1 cup frozen corn kernels

#### Directions

1. Cook beef, bell pepper, onion and garlic in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat until meat crumbles and is no longer pink. Drain well and return to Dutch oven.
2. Stir in tomatoes, chili beans, squash cubes, beef broth, cumin and chili powder and bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
3. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes.
4. Stir in corn and cook uncovered for 15 minutes until squash is tender and chili is thickened.

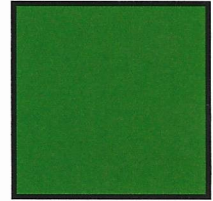


#### A Bowl of Zesty Flavors by Fred Day

It's the butternut squash that elevates this recipe above other chilis. The squash lends a delicate but enticing sweetness. The result is a chili that pairs well with a wide range of side dishes. Though a bit unorthodox, I served rice with the chili to form a fun and filling meal. This chili holds up well overnight; the flavors are even more pronounced the day after preparation. It's a terrific meal for any time of year and any occasion.



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#### October Arrivals and Departures

In the next 50 days, bird traffic over Virginia's skies will intensify as October migrations take hold. The Common Loon will settle in the coastal regions of Virginia, here for a stay that will extend until next March. Listen for the wailing call of the loon, a sound that suggests wild laughter. It is that raucous "laughter" which led to the expression, "crazy as a loon." The loon is an excellent swimmer but has a difficult time walking because its legs are set far to the back of its body. The bird's awkward walk gave rise to the name loon, which comes from the Scandinavian word *lom*, meaning "lame." As the common loon arrives, the Blue Grosbeak will be taking its leave. Blue grosbeaks are common summer residents of Virginia, enjoying our environs from mid-April until October. From Virginia, the blue grosbeaks will head for the warmer temperatures of Mexico and Central America. Along with the common loon, other fall arrivals include Red-breasted Merganser ducks. Red-breasted mergansers arrive in Virginia in late October and remain here until April. The red-breasted mergansers are known for their speed in flight, having been clocked up to 100 miles per hour. Like a large airline carrier, the merganser needs a long run to gain sufficient speed for takeoff.



Common Loon



Red-breasted Merganser



Blue Grosbeak

[Source: *Birds of Virginia Field Guide*, Stan Tekiela, author]

#### A Heartfelt Thanks to Our Donors

The Alliance for the Physically Disabled truly appreciates the continuing generosity of all members of the Merica House community. We wish to acknowledge the donations received recently from the following individuals:

Deborah Knowlton  
Charlotte & Jeffrey Kovatchitch

John Renfro

Pamela & Manny Sanchez  
Mary Jean & David Zook

# MERICA HOUSE

Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc.

**YES! Please accept my donation for Merica House and its mission of providing independence with dignity.**

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*The Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc. (APD) is a non-profit organization committed to creating accessible and affordable housing opportunities with full-time personal assistance services for adults with severe physical disabilities. APD's core mission is to operate and maintain Merica House. APD is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.*

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