



THE {FULL} LIFE

Touchmark at Meadow Lake Village Newsletter | Issue 2 • 2023



Caring for Our Planet Across Touchmark

Earth Day is a crucial annual observation that helps us refocus on what we can do to be good stewards of our environment. It is also one that countless team members and residents are passionate about. That zeal is evident across our communities with a wide variety of actions and events to highlight our shared concern and commitment. Examples include:

Touchmark at Fairway Village is hosting an Earth Day Sensory Walk benefiting The Canopy Project, which plants trees worldwide to help preserve our environment and combat climate change. Touchmark will donate a seedling tree for each participant to be planted in their honor. The walk will feature sensory stations to sharpen awareness of various earth elements and our senses, such as smelling plant life/herbs, tasting water, touching items from nature, and focusing on oxygen via mindfulness on air. Specialists will be at each brief stop.

Touchmark at Mount Bachelor Village is heading to Smith Rock for a group clean-up effort of one of Bend's most beloved natural wonders. In Prescott, Touchmark at The Ranch will host daily presentations on local conservation efforts from organizations such as Highland Center for Natural History and Prescott Water Resources. They will also welcome local organic vendors selling sustainable products and services throughout the week.

Resident Elwood Rieke and his wife LaVon from Touchmark at Harwood Groves are ardent environmental

advocates of their community, both at Touchmark and through their church. When the ground isn't snow-covered, the couple walks the one-mile loop around campus nearly every day picking up and disposing of trash. They've led efforts to replace fluorescent lighting with LEDs as well as plant native grasses and shrubs that are pollinators for butterflies and bees. Elwood says, "My wife and I are committed to caring for our environment and doing whatever we can to contribute positively throughout our community."

This quarter, we hope you'll be inspired to find ways to care for our planet and preserve our vital ecosystems.

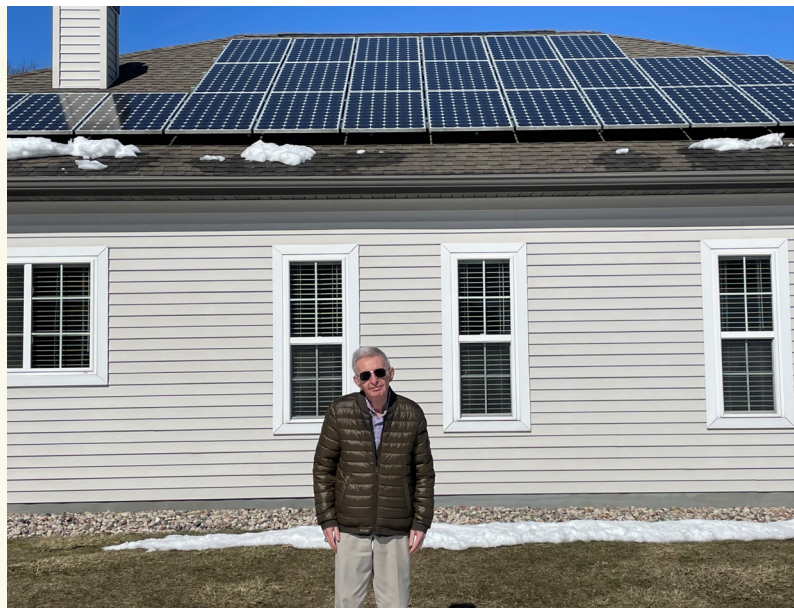
Resident Spotlight

*Bill Geenen, Touchmark on
West Prospect resident*

Bill and his wife Joan (Jo) have lived in a Touchmark single-level home since 2006. Lifelong environmental advocates, they installed 27 solar panels on their roof in 2009. As of March this year, their panels have produced nearly 69,000 kilowatt hours of power. This allows them to produce more than enough electricity to power their home and then some. Bill says most people don't realize there is zero maintenance needed on the solar panels, and they last approximately 50 years. "They'll be here longer than we will," he says.

Decades of Conservation Efforts

One organization that greatly benefits from Bill's enthusiasm for the natural environment is the private nonprofit Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust. He served two terms (the maximum permitted) as Treasurer of the organization and is still involved today by serving as the self-appointed "Marsh Master" of a wetland around the corner from Touchmark. He visits frequently to pick up trash, look for any signs of vandalism, and generally check that everything looks as it should.



Preserving Nature at Home

Bill says, "You're never too old to get involved with environmental preservation." For example, he's taken it upon himself to go down to the stream behind their home to pick up trash every couple of weeks when the weather permits. He is often joined by fellow residents, one of whom likes to affectionately refer to himself as Bill's assistant. On any given outing, they each come back with a full, large bag of trash that had accumulated and flowed downstream.

Why Touchmark?

When asked why they chose Touchmark, Bill said he wanted to be someplace that would be a supportive community for Jo should something happen to him. He maintains that this was the right choice for them.

Community Highlights

Enriching lives through fun and vibrant community events!





Seven Dimensions of Wellness: Environmental



Surrounded by natural and man-made environments, good stewardship means respecting resources by choosing “green” processes that re-use and recycle goods. It also means looking at ways to bring people into the natural environment and encourage active living through urban and property designs emphasizing walking paths, meditation, vegetable gardens, and similar options.

This is how the International Council of Active Aging defines the environmental aspect of wellness, and it's easy to see it reflected in our communities through our structures, amenities, and programming. So, what does this mean for those who live and work at Touchmark?

Looking beyond the positive impacts of practicing sustainability and conservation for our earth, getting in touch with nature benefits the individual on a deep level. Studies show that people who engage in earth-care report feeling more fulfilled and interconnected than those who don't. In a world that is rapidly changing, caring for our planet can result in increased levels of control and agency. Through being outside and becoming active in nature, we experience both mental and physical health benefits.

For example, gardening is a great physical activity, and growing your own food increases your intake of fruits and veggies. There's also a sense of accomplishment when you devote time and attention to living things such as plants.

Spending time in nature can result in less cognitive fatigue, decreased risk of mental illness, enhanced mood, and higher self-esteem. When it comes to physical health, outdoor activity can lead to decreased blood pressure, heart rate, and adrenaline.

Ways you can care for the environment as well as your personal well-being include:

- **Get out in the garden:** Community gardens help create healthy food and decrease the stress transporting food places on the environment.
- **Bike or walk for short trips:** Studies show that 25% of volatile organic compounds are emitted in the first few miles of travel. Hopping on your bike for your next local outing can help keep air pollution down.
- **Go vintage:** The fashion industry is a major source of pollution—it produces 92 million tons of waste every year. Buying used clothes can help the environment and give your wardrobe a boost of originality.
- **Decrease your consumption:** If you're wasting a lot of food or tend to buy knick-knacks that never get used, see where you can shift your habits to consume less. This can ultimately help you cut down on expenses as well, making it a win-win situation.
- **Consider donating your time or money to environmentally focused organizations:** There are likely many earth-centric nonprofits in your area. To get started, visit [VolunteerMatch.org](https://www.VolunteerMatch.org) and select the “environment” category to find some near you.

