## THE BRIGHT SIDE FAMILY



## ANNUAL REPORT





















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#### Dear Friends,

As we look back on another remarkable year, our hearts are full of gratitude and hope. What began as a small community rooted in optimism has grown into a vibrant, powerful movement — one that uplifts, empowers, and reminds people of all ages that life keeps getting better, especially when we choose to see the bright side.

This year, we've seen incredible growth. Our community reached new milestones, with more voices sharing their stories, more connections forming across generations, and more people embracing the truth that you are never too old, too late, or too far behind to live a full and joyful life.

We've hosted new events, expanded our reach online, and launched initiatives focused on belonging, wellness, and the beauty of living life on your own terms. And every step of the way, you — our Bright Side Family — have been at the heart of it all.

Your courage to show up authentically, your kindness toward one another, and your commitment to growth have been nothing short of inspiring. Whether you joined us this year or have been with us from the start, you are the reason this community thrives.

This year also marked a major milestone — our 35th anniversary. For over three decades, Bright Side Manor has stood as a beacon of compassion, dignity, and possibility. We are so proud to celebrate 35 years of serving older adults with heart, purpose, and unwavering commitment. It's a testament to what can happen when a community believes in people, invests in their well-being, and embraces aging not as a decline but as a vibrant, meaningful chapter of life.

As we look ahead, our mission remains clear: to continue shining light on the stories, wisdom, and beauty of every stage of life — especially the ones that are too often overlooked. We're excited to expand our programs, deepen our impact, and make space for even more people to feel seen, supported, and celebrated.

Thank you for being part of this journey — this year and for the last 35. Here's to the next chapter: one filled with connection, growth, and shared joy.

With deep gratitude and love,

## ELIZABETH DAVIS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





### VISION & MISSION 🌟



The Bright Side Family is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide affordable housing, affordable assisted living, and support services that respond to the changing needs and preferences of older adults in ways that offer choice, promote dignity, ensure safety, and advance economic security.

The Bright Side Family was originally founded as Geriatric Services Inc. in 1990 by Executive Director, Elizabeth Davis, and Geriatrician, Charles Davis, as a response to the lack of affordable supportive housing that was facing their clients and patients.

That same year, Geriatric Services Inc. took over management of Bright Side Manor, a historic residential health care facility that had been operating as senior housing since 1916. At Bright Side Manor, the organization was able to provide the quality affordable housing for seniors that so many communities were lacking. As of today, it is the only assisted living facility in Bergen County that is truly affordable for low-and-middle income older adults.

To address the shortage of subsidized senior housing, the organization opened The Brookdale, a 62-unit subsidized senior apartment building in Teaneck in 2016, and created the PALS (Portable Assisted Living Services) assisted living program in 2015. Assisted Living Programs (ALPs) are licensed to provide services for seniors in subsidized housing who are no longer independent, but cannot afford or do not wish to move out of their community. We have completed a second building with 40-unit independent senior apartments at 1425 Teaneck Rd, with proximity to restaurants, a bus stop, and shopping, as well as an on-site community center.

With expertise in providing holistic and cost-effective assisted living services, The Bright Side Family now operates PALS in three locations: Westwood House in Westwood, NJ and Golden Tower and Belmont Gardens in Garfield, NJ. With support from PALS, tenants can remain in their own apartments as they are provided assistance with personal care, meal preparation, medication administration, light housekeeping, laundry, and health monitoring services.

That same year, The Bright Side Family launched Age-Friendly Teaneck with support from The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation. Age-Friendly Teaneck is based on the World Health Organization's strategic goal of "facilitating the inclusion of older persons to make our world more age-friendly." The initiative in Teaneck collaborates with local stakeholders to improve overall livability for community members and serve as a model for other New Jersey communities committed to supporting an aging population.



## Building a Brighter Future for Seniors

Elizabeth Davis: Compassion, Vision, and Community

Nestled in the heart of Bergen County, The Bright Side Family stands as a testament to what purposeful leadership and unwavering compassion can achieve. At its helm is Elizabeth Davis, LCSW, whose tireless devotion has reshaped senior care across northern New Jersey.

It all began in 1990, when Elizabeth—alongside geriatrician Charles Davis—founded Geriatric Services Inc. Their mission was urgent and clear: affordable and supportive housing for older adults. That same year, they took stewardship of Bright Side Manor, a historic assisted living facility, reviving its purpose and preserving its legacy.

#### A Legacy of Accessibility

Under Elizabeth's leadership, Bright Side Manor has remained the only assisted living facility in Bergen County truly dedicated to low- and middle-income seniors, accepting Medicaid beds and operating on a sliding pay scale. Her approach rejects limitations—embracing instead flexible models that adjust to residents' evolving needs without financial or administrative barriers.

#### **Innovating with Impact**

In 2015, Elizabeth and her team launched PALS (Portable Assisted Living Services)—an in-home assisted living offering in subsidized housing across Westwood and Garfield. As the only such program in Bergen County, including a full-time social worker, PALS extends a dignified lifeline to older adults wishing to stay rooted in their communities.

A year later, she unveiled The Brookdale, a 62-unit subsidized apartment complex in Teaneck—designed with aging in place at its core. Plans are already underway for a second 40-unit residence, signaling a sustained effort to keep seniors within familiar, supportive environments.

#### **Promoting Age-Friendly Community**

Visionary beyond bricks and mortar, Elizabeth spearheaded Age-Friendly Teaneck in 2016, with backing from the Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation. Inspired by the World Health Organization's ideals, she united local organizations, government, and residents to enhance the town's livability for all generations.

The movement gained momentum in 2022 with Senior Checks—a financial wellness initiative tailored to empower older adults. Free services include bill-pay assistance, budgeting, scam protection, and customized workshops for older women—reflecting Elizabeth's belief in personalized, inclusive programming.

In 2024, the newest chapter unfolds at 1425 Teaneck Road—a 40-unit independent-living building complete with a community center, rooftop garden, accessible design, and partnerships with Holy Name Medical Center, Jewish Family & Children's Services, Bergen County Senior Services, and Township Social Services <u>thebrightsidefamily.org</u>.

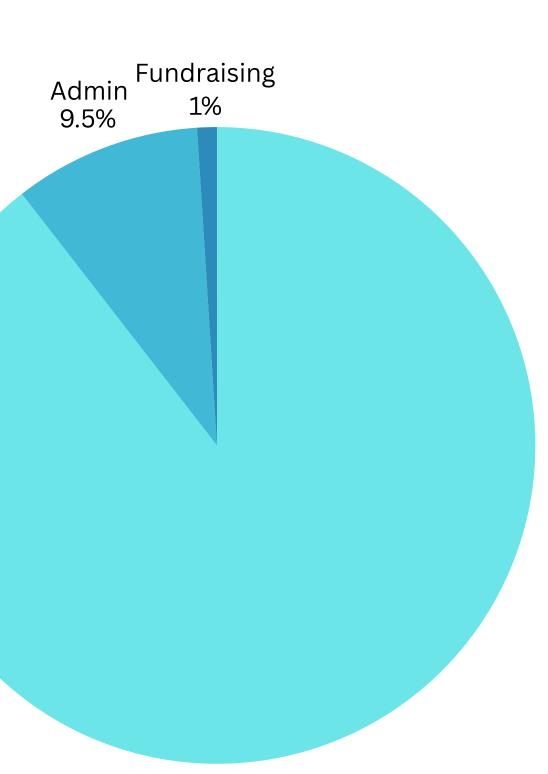
#### Shaping an Age-Friendly Future

With over three decades of service, The Bright Side Family's impact echoes far beyond its buildings. Elizabeth's leadership has brought vital programs like financial literacy workshops, home-based care, affordable housing, and inclusive social initiatives—touching hundreds of seniors and their families.

Looking ahead, Elizabeth Davis remains committed to innovation, ensuring older adults are respected, supported, and empowered. Her legacy is not merely in facilities built—but in lives uplifted, communities strengthened, and a culture of dignity entrenched.



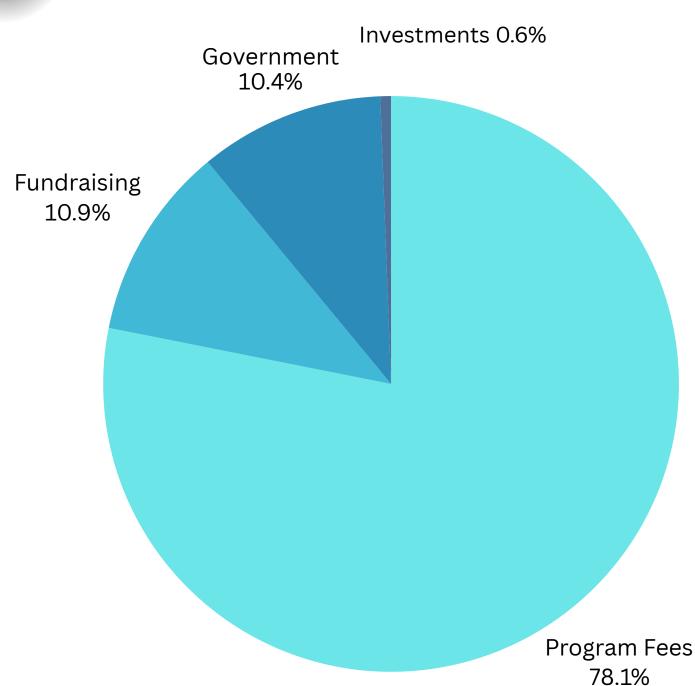
## FINANCIALS 2024 EXPENSES



Program Services 89.5%



## FINANCIALS 2024 REVENUE





### **OUR IMPACT IN 2024**

## YOUR SUPPORT=MORE IMPACT OUR 2024 SNAPSHOT

#### **Caring for Older Adults**

117 Residents in our assisted assisted living facility Bright Side Manor and our PALS in-home program.



#### **Affordable Housing**

95+ Older adults provided with affordable housing in our two senior buildings The Brookdale and 1425 Teaneck Road.





#### **Economic Security**

Over 60+ receiving one-onone money management services. Over 250 attend our financial literacy workshops.



#### **Community Advocacy**

Leading the Age-Friendly Teaneck initiative and other advocacy efforts that seek to make the community more inclusive and responsive to the needs of people of all ages and all abilities.





## MOMENTS OF GIVING, MILESTONES OF CHANGE

- We revived our classic Mini Golf Tournament on September 21st at Paramus Mini Golf with sponsorship opportunities levels that ranged and allowed companies and people to add their name to support round, course or hole.
- Hosted an Oktoberfest Backyard BBQ at Bright Side Manor featuring our cuisine and offered people an opportunity to tour Bright Side Manor, our assisted living community.
- GivingTuesday and Year End Campaign was promoted on our social media with the theme of "Together We Give" highlighting some ways our volunteers and donors give back and collectively part of our impact.





## MOMENTS OF GIVING, MILESTONES OF CHANGE

## BERGEN COUNTY ESTABLISHES AGE-FRIENDLY TASK FORCE First Age-Friendly Task Force in the State of New Jersey

Congratulations to Elizabeth Davis in being Appointed to Bergen County Age-Friendly Task Force! Eleven government, civic, academic and business leaders to the county's inaugural Age-Friendly Task Force.

Elizabeth Davis, Executive Director of The Bright Side Family, the nonprofit that leads Age-Friendly Teaneck, was among them.

#### More details:

https://files.constantcontact.com/05249d54401/f9ddfe31e1ee-4720-b6d4-9c3b4e787324.pdf?rdr=true





## MOMENTS OF GIVING, MILESTONES OF CHANGE

"We stand ready to be your partner." That was the message that Age-Friendly Teaneck and The Bright Side Family Executive Director Elizabeth Davis had for NJ Department of Human Services on Thursday when the state honored Teaneck by choosing The Brookdale Teaneck Senior Housing as the site for its announcement of a new Age-Friendly Blueprint and Community Grant Program.

#### Read more:

https://nj.gov/humanservices/news/pressreleases/2024/approved/202405 30.shtml





## A JOURNEY THROUGH THE DECADES

1990

Bright Side Manor



2016

The Brookdale



2023

Bright Side Manor Expansion



2024

1425 Teaneck Rd





## THE BRIGHT SIDE FAMILY BOARD MEMBERS

#### **President**

Carolyn Larke

#### **Vice President**

Matthew Leber

#### **Secretary**

Fran Monteleone

#### **Treasurer**

Ilene Marcus

#### **Family Representative**

Wendy McGuire

#### **Trustees**

Karen Blick

Doug Ciallella

Brian D'Amico

Mitchell Dinnerstein

Judy LaJoie

Kay Lucas

Dena Matthews

Dave A. Peart

Louella Rose

Claire Scarano

Mary Ann Van Clief



## THE BRIGHT SIDE FAMILY TRUSTEES - SPOTLIGHT



Louella Rose

I have served as a Board member of the Bright Side Family for five years. I joined the Board during Covid and had just become part of the 'sandwich generation', caring for my aging parents and kids. Seeing my hard working, independent parents change into being unable to manage their basic everyday needs shocked me. It opened my eyes to improving the quality of life and affordability of our cherished senior community members.

I am enthusiastic about Bright Side Family's' mission of safety, dignity, affordability, and care without conditions. I look forward to helping our seniors transition and live their golden years with joy and dignity.



**Judy LaJoie** 

I have been on the board since January 2025 but started to visit Bright Side Manor with fellow board member Brian D'Amico in mid 2024. I have been a nurse for over 34 years and patient care, safety and advocacy are my passions. Being able to help care for our precious resources like our seniors both directly and indirectly is something that I feel we all must contribute to as we will all getting older, and the standard should be set with the health, care and welfare as top of mind.

There is nothing more rewarding than being able to share your brain, your talents and your time to help others, especially with the aging population. I look forward to years of making memories through work with The Bright Side Family!



### **BRIGHT SIDE MANOR**



#### We believe in care without conditions.

At Bright Side Manor, we believe in offering affordable rates for high-quality care. To ensure affordability, we welcome residents through the Managed Long Term Service and Support Programs (MLTSS - Medicaid), as well as sliding scale, affordable private pay.

Bright Side Manor is unique because we offer Medicaid beds without any prerequisites for acceptance so that anyone can benefit from our exceptional care. Additionally, as an "all-inclusive" home, our residents will not face additional costs for changes in health and support needs over time.





## BRIGHT SIDE MANOR FAMILY TESTIMONIAL

Dad, our 'Teddy Bear', came to Bright Side Manor one year ago. The circumstances that led to his admission were less than ideal. He suffered another stroke a few years ago while living alone in North Carolina. He was immediately transported to the local hospital via EMS, where he had Intracranial emergency surgery. As a result of this episode,

he has minor stroke paralysis on the left side of his body. In addition, he was diagnosed with early onset dementia. After a short stay at a Rehabilitation Facility in Manhattan, we returned my Dad to North Carolina, honoring his autonomy and desire to return home with home health aide support."

Sending him home, where he was again isolated, came with struggles. At the point that our Dad asked for placement in a New Jersey facility closer to family, we began the process of making it happen. This included virtual interviews and a tour, a super-smooth process thanks to the Bright Side Manor Office Manager, Dee.

Since admission to Bright Side Manor, everyone raves about the significant change in our Dad's appearance, health and mood. The most impactful factor that fostered this improvement is the daily, friendly interaction at Bright Side Manor and plentiful activities, combatting the isolation and loneliness he suffered while living alone. The entire staff immediately tapped into my Dad's preferred de-escalation method and are able to calm him immediately using the phrase "shake it off" and doing a shoulder shimmy dance when he is even slightly agitated. In addition, our Dad receives 1:1 ADL assistance (bathing, dressing, laundry, cleaning). Many Thanks to Richard and Superb Meals with great music Thomas and 24 hour Nursing Care Lisa and Team.

In summary, as a Licensed Social Worker, I researched a lot of ALFs throughout many NJ counties and Bright Side Manor is the BEST intimate facility with wraparound supportive services that provides optimal care for our Geriatric population. We are forever grateful!!!



## PORTABLE ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES (PALS)



PALS offers a way for seniors living in subsidized housing to age-in-place and receive customized care, allowing them to maintain independence and safely remain at home. It is an Assisted Living Program (ALP), which are licensed by the State of New Jersey.

PALS is the only ALP in Bergen County, and the only ALP with a full-time social worker on-staff in the state.

PALS is more than just a service — it's a lifeline for many of our residents and their families.

"Everyone Has a Story"

At PALS, every resident brings a lifetime of memories, experiences, and wisdom. Through our PALS initiative, we take the time to listen, celebrate, and share the unique journeys of those who call our community home. These stories not only honor their pasts but also inspire our present.

Today, we're proud to share the voices of three incredible residents whose stories remind us of the strength, resilience, and joy that define The Bright Side Family. Let's meet them...

A story that stands out is of a married couple we serve through PALS. Without this support, they would likely be in long-term care and separated — with one requiring memory care in a different facility.

One PALS resident actually told The Bright Side Family Board members that we saved her life and are really the only family she has.

Another one of our residents only has one son who lives overseas. PALS is helping her with the Medicaid process and being her support system while she undergoes some medical and mental issues.



## PORTABLE ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES (PALS)







JULY BIRTHDAY
CELEBRATION
FOR OUR PALS
RESIDENT!



## PORTABLE ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES (PALS)

Stress Management Presentation held at our Belmont Garden Location in Garfield, NJ.

Residents and staff explored practical tools for coping with daily stress, promoting emotional well-being, and embracing a calmer mindset.







### THE BROOKDALE



Designed with aging in mind
The Bright Side Family opened The
Brookdale independent senior apartment
building in April 2016. The building was
made with aging-in-place in mind and is
located in a quiet Teaneck neighborhood.
The Brookdale has 61 one-bedroom units,
a covered parking garage, large communal
spaces, and activity rooms, including a
sewing room and library.



#### AGING IN PLACE.

Tenants of The Brookdale have access to an array of support services that enhance daily life and enable comfortable aging-in-place over time.

- Optional dining program will soon be available for tenants who wish to dine with others on occasion or on a regular basis
- Physicians will be available for health screenings and monitoring on-site
- For tenants who prefer to see doctors in the community, assistance with arranging transportation is provided
- · Assistance in accessing off-site activities and programming

#### COMMUNITY.

- The Brookdale offers more than just a place to live.
- Resident-run social groups and activities
- On-site programming and recreation
- Access to multiple bus lines and shopping
- Location in Teaneck, an <u>Age-Friendly community</u>



### 1425 TEANECK ROAD



#### Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony Celebrates 1425 Teaneck Road Project

On November 1, local officials, community partners, and The Bright Side Family gathered to celebrate the opening of a new affordable senior apartment building and community center at 1425 Teaneck Road. The five-story building, developed with The Alpert Group, Monarch Housing Associates, Thriven Design, C&C Construction Management, and the Township of Teaneck, offers 40 affordable apartments for older adults and a ground-floor community center.

"This project has created more than just homes," said Elizabeth Davis, Executive Director of The Bright Side Family. "It's created a secure future for residents to age in place with on-site health and social supports, while also offering a new gathering space for the wider community." The project has been recognized as "Project of the Year" by the Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey. The building and community center will also be dedicated to the memory of the late Mayor Lizette Parker, a champion of senior causes.

The new center will host wellness services, educational events, and intergenerational programs in partnership with Holy Name Medical Center, Jewish Family and Children's Services, Bergen County Senior Services, and Teaneck Public Schools.

For program announcements, email info@age-friendlyteaneck.org or call 201-530-6756.



### AGE-FRIENDLY TEANECK



Making Teaneck as great a place to grow old as it is to grow up.

Age-Friendly Teaneck had a transformational year in 2024, with milestones that expanded the footprint and reach of this communitywide project to make our community an inclusive and supportive environment for people of all ages and abilities.

Here are Notable Achievements of the Year

- 1) We have a home base now! The opening of the 1425 Community Room, which has helped us launch new socialization and informational programs that foster new ties between young and old.
- 2) We partnered with the Teaneck Public Library to host a Connections Fair during Older Americans Month in May to help connect community residents to crucial resources and education they need to age-in-place.
- 3) We were granted renewal status in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Cities after completing this comprehensive progress report.
- 4) We held our 5 th "Exploring Careers in Aging" summer internship for high school students and then built off that success to develop a new partnership with Teaneck High School to have young people perform community service by volunteering for and participating in new intergenerational programs we're creating.
- 5) As part of our Community Begins at Home companion initiative, we hosted a Home Safety Expo at St. Anastasia Church that featured a variety of speakers and presentations from disability services organizations and aging-in-place experts.



## AGE-FRIENDLY TEANECK







### A Bridge of Trust:

### Mrs. Greene's Journey with the Senior Checks Program



At 82, Mrs. Lillian Greene had always taken pride in managing her affairs. A retired school librarian and lifelong resident of the community, she was fiercely independent, witty, and sharp. But when her husband passed away, the responsibilities of navigating bills, insurance claims, and benefit forms became overwhelming. Confusing paperwork piled up, and a few missed payments left her feeling anxious and alone.

That's when she was introduced to the Senior Checks Program.

Matched with Emily, a kind-hearted volunteer who visited weekly, Mrs. Greene gradually opened up. Together, they sorted through months of mail, got her back on track with bill payments, and even set up a monthly budget. Emily patiently walked her through using online banking for the first time — a moment Mrs. Greene proudly called "a miracle."

But the program did more than just balance her checkbook. Through its comprehensive support, Mrs. Greene was able to apply for NJ SAVE and SNAP, easing her monthly expenses. A referral to a partner food pantry ensured she had access to nutritious meals. When a suspicious caller tried to scam her out of money, the program's social worker stepped in quickly, helping her file a report and secure her accounts.

"I didn't know help like this existed," Mrs. Greene said. "They didn't just help me with my money — they reminded me that I'm not forgotten."

Her story is one of many. In 2024, the Senior Checks Program provided over 1,400 hours of compassionate, hands-on support to 66 older adults like Mrs. Greene. Behind every number is a life touched — a senior empowered to live with dignity, security, and peace of mind.



### Age-Friendly Teaneck Interns

Our Age-Friendly Teaneck Interns have made a lasting impact through their thoughtful interactions with older adults in the program.

These moments highlight the power of community, compassion, and connection across generations.







### Community Begins at Home

## Funds Renewed for Teaneck's Inclusive Healthy Communities Initiative

The Bright Side Family is proud to announce that Community Begins at Homeour initiative supporting older Teaneck residents with disabilities—has received renewed funding from the NJ Division of Disability Services for another two years.

"This is a win for our community," said Executive Director Elizabeth Davis. "It shows Teaneck's dedication to being a welcoming place for people of all ages and abilities."

Launched two years ago and run alongside Age-Friendly Teaneck, this initiative tackles key aging-in-place challenges: safety at home, social isolation, and access to resources. With input from residents, surveys, and local events, we've worked to raise awareness and connect individuals to support.

Moving forward, our focus includes:

- Recruiting residents with disabilities to serve as paid advisors and ambassadors
- Partnering with the Township to improve virtual accessibility and install hearing loop systems
- Creating a disability justice advisory board to guide future planning

"Our goal is simple," said EJ Vizzi, Director of Senior Programs, "Ensure that residents with disabilities help shape the community they live in." To get involved, contact cbah@agefriendlyteaneck.org or call 201-530-6756.



### Community Begins at Home





### Community Begins at Home





## THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Linda Mills Nunzia Mazzoccoli Carol Johannesson Chris Wilson Janice Dabney Marsha Mandel Allen Feltman **Bob Calabrese** Janice Ade Rellie Lou Diana Rodriguez Joanne Kurr Sherry Baur Theresa Kennelly Trish Carney Valerie Waleburn Michael Dripchak Zachary Benjamin Carlee Molina

Isabelle
Claire
Lorraine
Dottie
Bob
Karishma
Hanna
Eliyah
Chelsea

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS FROM SAMSUNG!





# THANK YOU LUNCHEON FOR OUR VOLUNTEERS







### THANK YOU TO OUR **DONORS**

**Anonymous Donors** 

Alexander & Vesna Markarian

Alexander Mele

Alexandra Kritikos

Alicia Ross

Angelo Del Russo

Arlene and Philip Gartenberg

Barbara Ostroth

Bergen County Human Services

Bessie Nadine Hinds

Beth Ann Buckley

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Claire Scarano

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Joanne O'Neill

Johan German

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Joseph Alpert

Joseph McHale

Judith Distler

Judith Jaffe

Judith LaJoie

Julia Stoumbos

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Tyler Pitman

Valerie Walburn



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