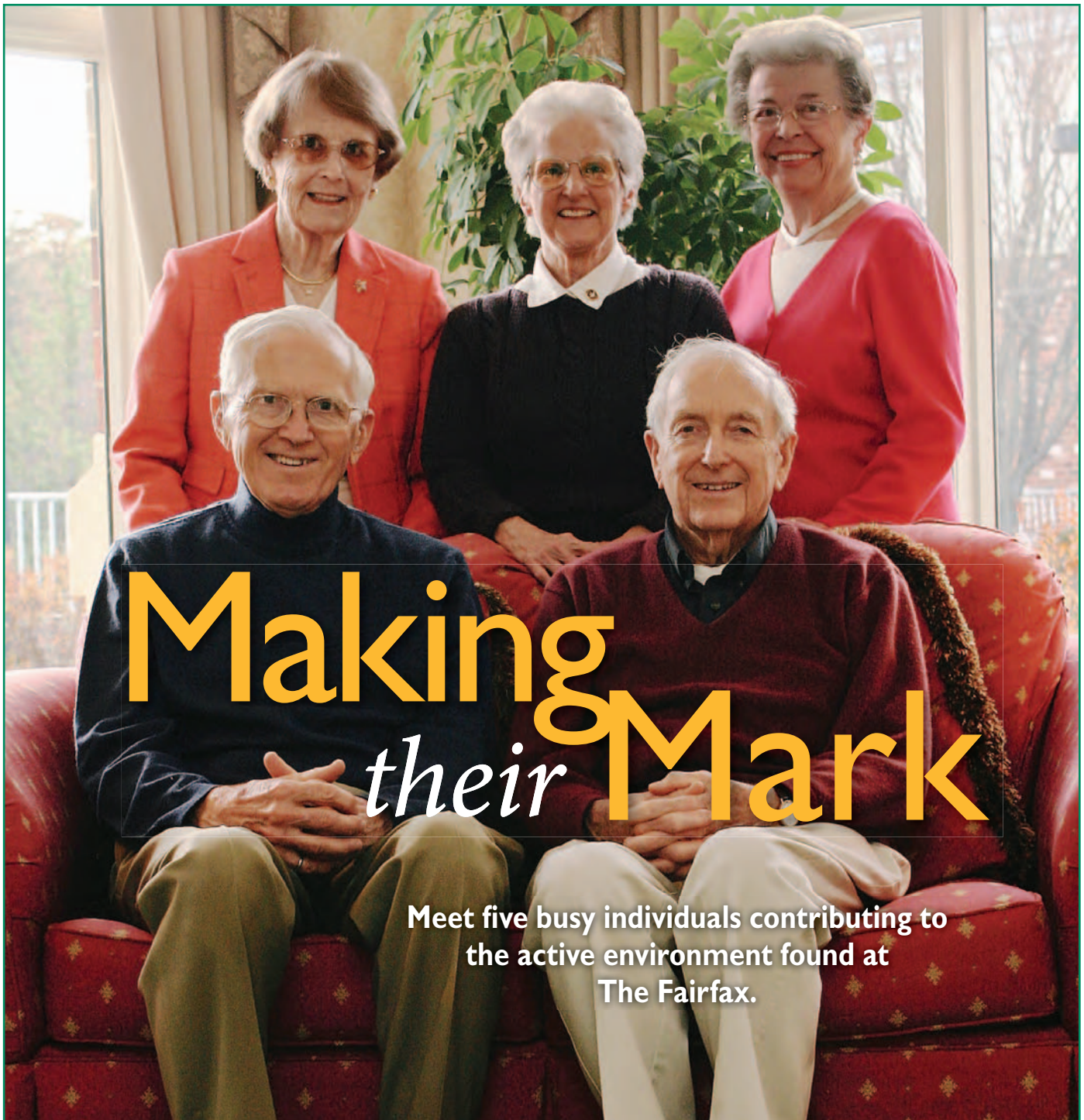


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Making *their* Mark

Meet five busy individuals contributing to
the active environment found at
The Fairfax.

Making their Mark

by Lauren Searson

“It’s been great here, I have a reason to get up every single morning,” said Anita Dominguez of her current home, The Fairfax, a Continuing Care Community located in Fort Belvoir, Va. And what she and her peers Pat Cassibry, Alan Mayer, Eleanor Carter and Allan Jose are waking up to is a vibrant community of active individuals that feel like family.

Since the community is open to retired military, Foreign Service, USPHS, NOAA, CIA and FBI officers and their spouses, one can find a tight-knit group of individuals here that remain as busy as ever.

Take for example, Anita, a retired nurse whose husband was in the Air Force for 28 years. “I followed him wherever he went, and wherever we went, I always worked,” she said.

When her husband passed away a few years ago, she decided to move to Virginia to be near her children and sought a home filled with military camaraderie. It was then she pulled into the campus of The Fairfax and immediately fell in love.

The lifelong worker had no problem immersing herself into life at the community. “A month after I moved in, I went into the health center to volunteer my services and I’ve been there ever since,” said Anita.

Also a member of The Fairfax Chorus, she is part of the Lorton Volunteer Fire Department Auxillary and active at Fort Belvoir. Highly involved in her church, she sings with the choir and has volunteered to be a lector and Eucharistic minister. “Anything they throw at me I’ll do,” she said with a laugh.

Like Anita, Pat Cassibry maintains a booked schedule. After her husband served in the Army for 27 years, he re-

tired in order for the couple to pursue their interests and travel with their grown daughter.

As residents of McLean, Va. for nearly 40 years, the couple knew they would inevitably move to the Fairfax, where many of their close friends lived.

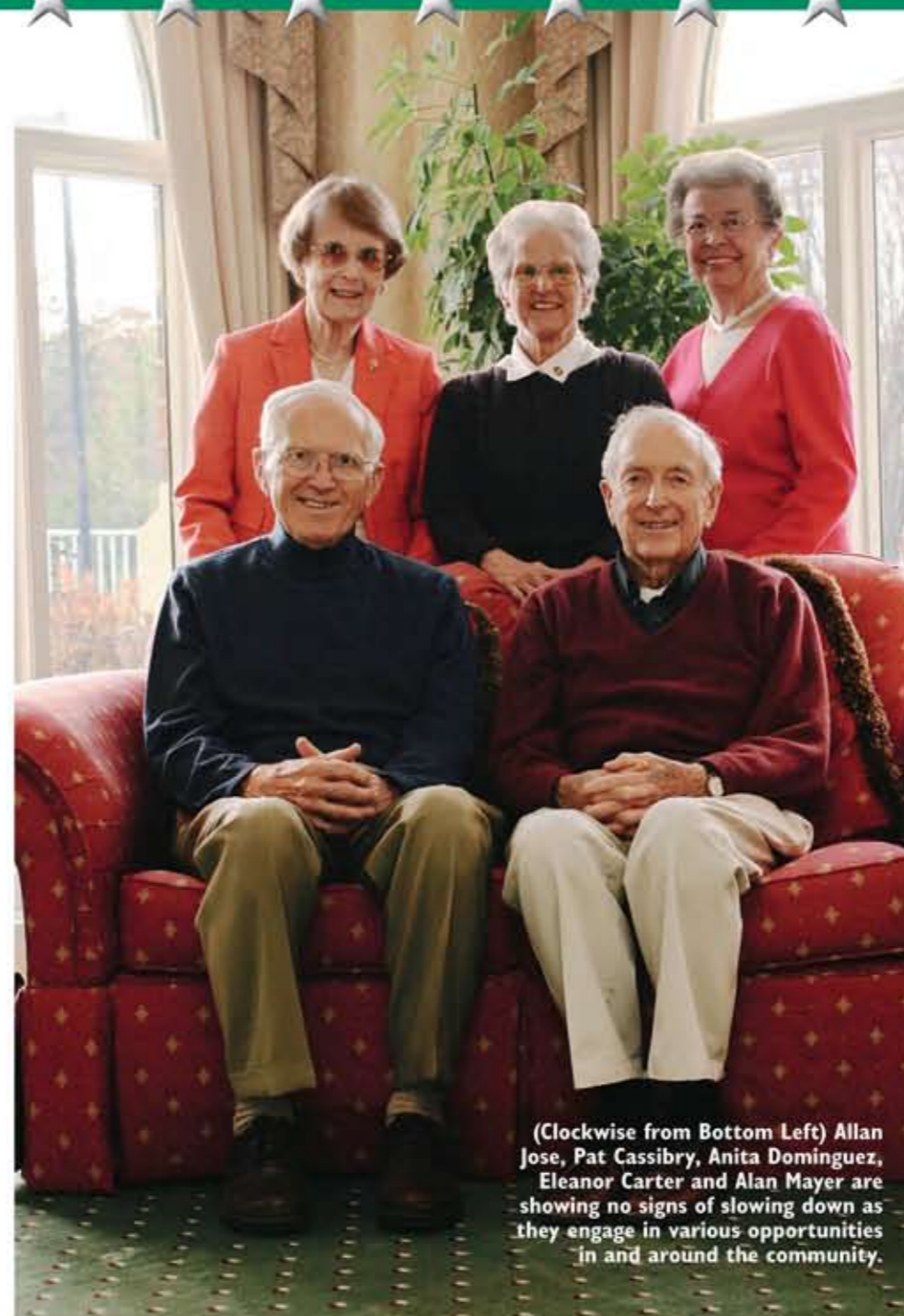
“My husband was with me for two years after we came here, and though he had his limitations, it was wonderful for him,” she said. “We made our large apartment more like our home.”

Upon her arrival to the community, Pat also started volunteering. She started with the clinic downstairs where residents of The Fairfax can make appointments with a variety of medical specialists including a full service dentist. She now works on average once a week. She also looks forward to working with her friends at The Fairfax’s gift shop and playing Marathon Bridge, a tradition continued by Eleanor Carter.

Though Pat does not have immediate family in the area, she is happy to say she has found one in not only her fellow residents, but the helpful staff. She recalled what one of her peers said to her after asking how she had liked her new home. She said, “Well you know 98 percent of the people love it here, and the other 2 percent wouldn’t be happy in heaven. That’s the general feel here; I’ve maintained the idea that it is a family-run place.”

Alan Mayer, whose wife Grace works with Pat in the gift shop, could not agree more on the supportive atmosphere of the community. “Military families take care of one another,” he said.

After spending 26 years in the Navy Reserve and over 30 in the CIA, Alan saw retirement as his call to get involved in the local community. Appointed to the Fairfax County Park Authority Board, Alan was eventually convinced to run for



(Clockwise from Bottom Left) Allan Jose, Pat Cassibry, Anita Dominguez, Eleanor Carter and Alan Mayer are showing no signs of slowing down as they engage in various opportunities in and around the community.

For the past four years, Alan has been busy as ever having served as vice-chair and now chairman of the Residents’ Council. He has also organized a group called The Rotarians of the Fairfax where members gather downstairs for a large dinner while engaging in volunteer activities and various sponsorships such as the fitness area and a Memorial Tree growth.

His experience in public service led him to also fill his schedule with encouraging his fellow residents to vote. “I saw a need that residents here should have an opportunity to meet the people that represent them at various levels of government,” he said. After successfully bringing in these government representatives and candidates, he said the voter turnout within the community was tremendous.

With active residents like Alan showing no signs of slowing down in their retirement, one might wonder their secret to maintaining such busy schedules.

To that, Alan, and Eleanor, might say it is the aerobics classes with which they start their morning every day. With this jumpstart, Eleanor, the gift shop manager, is off taking care of her duties that include buying, staffing and decorating.

She can also be seen playing the piano for the chorus as well as the organ for the community’s various religious services. Like Pat, she is in the Pan-Hellenic group open to anybody who belonged to a sorority in their college years.

Though she is an obvious contributor to the energetic environment of The Fairfax, Eleanor said the security of a continuum of care was a major factor in her transition.

“My parents had gone to a retirement home and it was the best gift they gave to us,” she said. “My sister and I were married to military men and moving around a lot, so it was nice to know they were well taken care of at the end.”

When they retired to the D.C. area following his 30 years of service in the Army, Eleanor and her husband lived in their home for 26 years before looking at different communities.

“My husband knew from the beginning that The Fairfax was where we would end up,” she said. “We liked the campus atmosphere and its convenient location to D.C.” And during the eight years they have lived in the community, the couple has enjoyed daytrips downtown with provided transportation. →

the Virginia House of Delegates, and he won.

Having served his constituency for 10 years, Alan then traveled with his wife and eventually learned about The Fairfax through his involvement in the Lifelong Learning Institute.

“We had been told that this was the ‘Cadillac’ of retirement communities,” he said with a laugh. Another perk was its convenient location to their home of 44 years, which the couple sold to their youngest son.

Making Their Mark

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But what Eleanor has truly enjoyed is the connections she has made thus far. “You come here and make wonderful friends, and the staff is very much a part of the family,” she said.

Like Eleanor, Allan Jose preferred the attractive community and its locale when deciding on his future residence after serving 30 years in the Army. “The campus is one of the finest and with this location, there is a lot of activity in the community,” he said.

Perhaps it was also the philanthropic environment at The Fairfax that also appealed to Allan, who has served as volunteer program coordinator for the English as a Second Language (ESL) team.

“Our focus has been to improve proficiency in English in order to allow employees to better serve in the workplace,” he said. “However, as students progress into advanced English, they broaden their focus to incorporate the world.”

He also devotes his time as chairman of the voter assistance program, composed of six volunteers who help residents with

the county, state and national voting process. This role consists of many duties such as assisting new residents applying to vote in the area as well as helping them make their first application to vote absentee.

Two years ago, Allan joined the Red Tag Sale, a program that has operated under the oversight of the Residents’ Council for several years. “The primary objective is to offer employees and residents used merchandise that is in good condition and fully serviceable at low costs,” he said.

A second objective is to offer families an outlet for disposing of the resident’s good, clean and useful home furnishings. Profits generated from this program are used for resident and employee programs.

Now in his fifth year at The Fairfax, Allan continues to relish in the decision he made. “Every day I commend myself on coming here,” he said. “It’s a fine community of people to live with and we all share a common bond.”

And with hallways adorned with plaques honoring different outstanding residents, one can see that common bond. Based on the stories of these five individuals, however, the only question is whether there is enough wall space to capture such an enthusiastic and supportive community. GRL

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