car, Darlene looked over to say something to Lee, but he was nowhere to be seen. He had tried stepping over an obstacle and, still getting used to his new orthotics, fell flat on his face. The paramedics came, and Darlene rode up front in the cab (wearing a leg brace on her own broken knee cap). The driver put her in charge of blowing the horn to help keep traffic cleared. Now that’s a first date to remember!

“A car fanatic, Lee bought a GTO, and on one of their road trips, he asked Darlene if she’d ever gone 100 mph. She said she hadn’t, so he ‘lit it up.’” Darlene notes, and they laughed. His next car was a flat black 2006 C5 Corvette, not the easiest thing to get in and out of, but he doesn’t let that hold him back.

These hot rods led next to his “Richard Petty Experience,” something that had been on his bucket list until the “Wish Come True” offer by Leisure Care made it a reality. He recounts, “I was driving around the track, and the escort kept telling me I needed to get over so the other cars could pass … and all I wanted to do was speed up.”

He said he “only” got to a top speed of 98. Only?! The worst part of this experience, Lee recalled, was climbing through the side window to get in and out of the car. “I’m not as spry as I used to be,” he laughs.

Lee hasn’t let his losses, his diabetes, heart surgery or back issues dictate his life. He continues to enjoy his kids and grandkids, travel with Darlene, play golf, and go on outings with friends to Cardinals games, Pere Marquette State Park, and other great local destinations.

And he’s got his eyes peeled for his next adventure rod: a vintage yellow truck he’ll gladly race all over town.

Sherry and Larry Schnee are like many senior couples. They’ve shared a life together, nearly 60 years in all, but they have very different health issues and very different ways of approaching life. As Larry put it, “When we go drive around the block, I typically think one way might be the best route, and Sherry may have another idea. Both ways get us to our destination.”

From Bronx, New York, Sherry and Larry have known each other since they were 7 years old. They raised two children and have five grandchildren. Today, they call The Renaissance on Peachtree, a Leisure Care Premier Community in Atlanta, Georgia, home.

Their different health needs and personalities make them perfect participants in a unique partnership between The Renaissance on Peachtree and Emory University. Sherry and Larry are helping emerging medical professionals understand the differences and challenges of senior patients through the university’s Senior Mentorship Program.

Sherry and Larry Schnee spend some quality time with the healthcare students they mentor.

Closing the Gap: Continued on page 42
The number of seniors across America is at a record high, and every day 10,000 more people turn 65. As a result of this fast-growing demographic, healthcare providers are working with an increasing number of older adults in their selected disciplines.

The Senior Mentorship Program pairs first-year medical, nursing, physician assistant, and physical therapy graduate students with senior mentors for one academic year to help promote a positive attitude toward older adults and enhance the psychosocial aspects of geriatric care. The program allows students to get to know these seniors as people, not just as patients.

The goal is to build more empathy and understanding by creating personal connections for these young medical professionals. The students are enlightened to the everyday challenges of seniors, such as what it might take to get to a doctor’s office or how aging can impact social well-being.

The program seeks active, healthy aging community members to partner with the students. They meet monthly to discuss a variety of provided topics, ranging from “bucket lists” to values.

Sherry and Larry have been meeting with their mentees, Lucy (an MD student) and Abbey (a physician’s assistant student), for a couple of hours each month over the past six months.

“We discuss a special topic each meeting and then spend a lot of time talking about what it means to live into your 80s, 90s and beyond. Sherry and I have very different health issues and have very different ways of dealing with situations. These differences help Lucy and Abbey understand the huge range of senior health issues and our ability to live with them. We enjoy being with these young, capable people and are happy that they care to be with and learn from us,” said Larry.

The partnership between Emory University and The Renaissance on Peachtree began in 2013 and has proved to be a beneficial relationship for both the school and the retirement community. In addition to the mentorship program, The Renaissance on Peachtree also hosts Emory’s Lifelong Learning Institute — continuing education classes for people over 50. It is a great resource for the university and allows The Renaissance to showcase its cutting-edge community and innovative approach to retirement. Class topics are suggested by seniors and have ranged from the Civil War to ballroom dancing to improvisational acting.

Larry and Sherry go to classes at Emory University two days a week and are also members of the Emory Patient Family Advisory Council, which improves healthcare relationships between patients and their doctors and the hospital.

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