



# ECS Newsletter

Year-End 2025

## Reflections on a transformational year

As 2025 comes to an end, we reflect on a few of this year's unique challenges and accomplishments. The Eaton Fire devastated much of Altadena in early January and resulted in the displacement of residents of MonteCedro for two months. Despite the disruption, many residents grew closer and formed new friendships, including with the residents of ECS's two other Life Plan Communities, The Canterbury and The Covington.

In keeping with the generous nature of MonteCedro residents, they created a Heroes Celebration in honor of the team members who provided essential support during the fire and ultimate evacuation. Perhaps the most touching action by residents was their desire to establish a fund to assist 12 team members who lost their homes. The fund raised about \$380,000!

By the end of February, the transfer of residents from Twelve Oaks Senior Living in Glendale to nearby senior living providers in preparation for the redevelopment of the community was complete. Because ECS appreciates the challenges inherent in transition, we provide ongoing life enrichment programming, as well as personal and financial support to residents in their new homes.

The Eaton Fire and its aftermath provided the ECS family of communities with critical information and experience that is being utilized to strengthen emergency preparation. And as we close 2025, we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of MonteCedro. Ten years later, it continues to be a thriving, beautiful community of welcoming residents and team members.

We now look to 2026 with excitement as the ECS family of communities begins to realize the fruits of the many years of planning, preparation, and development.

- MonteCedro's Phase II expansion will be completed.
- Residential Care Suites at The Canterbury will be finished.
- Required approval for the redevelopment and revitalization plans for Twelve Oaks Senior Living and The Canterbury, respectively will be obtained.
- Continued progress toward completion of enhancements to The Covington.

Creativity inspires the best in each of us and is essential to ECS's mission of creating exceptional communities and services. We are thankful for the residents who have chosen one of our communities. We are also grateful to the team, board members, donors, and partners who support ECS and its mission.

**James Rothrock**  
President and CEO



## Highlights

This newsletter features stories that capture the best of 2025 and the creativity that inspired some of our events and activities.

### The Canterbury

Creativity for every season

### The Covington

The music of living well

### MonteCedro

Rebuilding community through creativity

### Community

Elevating dementia care at ECS





## The Canterbury

### Creativity for every season

Residents of The Canterbury love to try new things, especially when creative expression is combined with a chance to socialize and celebrate.

One recent example was a special "Paint & Sip" watercolor class. Instructor Gabrielle Anderson provided each person with an image to use as inspiration. After a tutorial on how to blend paint colors and brushstroke, the painting began in earnest. To help the artists maintain their creative energy, our dining team prepared a beautiful spread of cheese, fruits and crackers. The "Sip" part was in the form of Cider and Wine. The results were amazing.

For Halloween, residents and team members really got into character and the creativity was impressive. "It was a really fun day," says Lisa Jimenez, Creative Living Coordinator. The inventive, colorful costumes brought an air of ghoulish fun to the day. There was also a special hosted appetizers and cocktails Happy Hour where violinist Paul Stein shared his talent.

For all the fun within our community, residents love to get out

and enjoy the many attractions that the South Bay area offers.

The Canterbury is proud to be a community partner of the South Bay Community Concert Association in Redondo Beach and many residents attended "The Starlets", a musical tribute show. Inspired by iconic trailblazers like The Ronettes, The Angels, The Shirelles, and The Supremes. It was sensational journey through the 1950s and '60s, a time when Pop, Doo-Wop, R&B, and Mo-town ruled the airwaves.

As Christmas approached, one highlight was an outing to Candy Cane Lane, a neighborhood where every house is more lit up than the next. "It's a really popular place to visit in December," Lisa says. In this area, there are more than 15 blocks of houses completely covered in Christmas lights and adornments. One house even has a Ferris wheel in the yard. Residents boarded our community bus and were driven through Candy Cane Lane in the evening to witness the dazzling holiday displays. Hot chocolate and freshly baked cookies helped make the trip extra special.

Perhaps no celebration was more joyous (or profound) than the birthday party for Ward Harman, who turned 103! As residents and staff joined in the well wishing, the event was made extra special by live music performed by the LA South Towns Chorus. Beautiful music for a beautiful man. Happy Birthday, Ward.



## The Covington

### The music of living well

Music is an integral part of life, providing us with joy, inspiration and connection with others. As individuals, favorite melodies and lyrics stay with us our entire lives, often becoming an indelible part of our memories and identity. At its essence, music brings people together – in celebration, in dance, and especially as a community.

At The Covington, music is a joyous part of daily life and over the past few months residents have been able to attend and participate in a variety of musical events and gatherings.

On a beautiful evening in August, residents enjoyed cocktails, indulged in delicious desserts and danced under the stars to the beloved music of Neil Diamond, thanks to the talented Kenny Hale and his band. Kenny is widely regarded as having the most accurate and heartfelt tribute to Neil Diamond today. His ability to capture Neil Diamond's signature voice, emotional depth, and stage presence – combined with the band's outstanding musicianship – created a memorable experience for everyone. "It was our end of summer bash so we were outside at the pavilion with big

beautiful lanterns," says Tracy Beam, Director of Creative Living. "It was a really great night."

In October, a little bit of Bavaria came to the community in the form of Oktoberfest. A German-inspired food and a beer tasting was the precursor to an afternoon of live music performed by men and women in lederhosen and traditional dirndls. It wasn't long before residents were on the dance floor demonstrating their polka moves and learning a few new ones.

A highlight of December was Candlelight Christmas. The event is part of the Schumacher Concert Series, which is unique to The Covington. Performed by the renowned Long Beach Camerata singers, Schumacher Hall was aglow in candle light, creating a lovely, intimate atmosphere. The concert featured timeless holiday carols and fresh new choral works that filled the community with the warmth and spirit of the holidays.

The coming year will again see a wide variety of musical programming, filling our community with melody and fostering the creative spirit that lies within each of us.

## MonteCedro

### Rebuilding community through creativity

The start of 2025 and the devastating Eaton Fires severely impacted MonteCedro. While residents were unable to return to their homes, MonteCedro held

Creative Living events on Zoom and sent daily emails to ensure everyone stayed connected.

Once residents returned to MonteCedro, the community leaned into an ambitious program of activities to help celebrate being at home again. Jackie Stevens, Sr. Director, Creative Living & Communications says the gatherings also provided opportunities for residents to reconnect over their experiences. "I am very proud of the work our Team did to ensure a smooth transition for residents as they returned home," Jackie says, "and our ongoing Creative Living events were an important aspect of that."

Creating an environment that felt like home again was important. The first big social gathering was a "Party like it's 1950" event, featuring both Elvis and Marilyn Monroe impersonators. In addition to the entertainment, the dining team created a special dinner menu entirely composed of resident favorites from the 1950s. "It was a day full of happy moments. Everyone was able to relax and simply enjoy being home," Jackie says.

In the Fall, MonteCedro had its biggest Halloween celebration ever. "We hosted a masquerade-themed casino night called "The Phantom's Lair", complete with a special dinner in the dining room. Residents came in costume, many masked. It was a spooktacular night," she says. Other highlights included Thriller-themed fitness classes with goats!

2025 also marked MonteCedro's 10th anniversary and in December, the community celebrated with a special "'Tis the Season for an Anniversary," Party. There was plenty of merriment and good cheer as residents enjoyed live music, dancing, and specialty drinks. A group of strolling carolers also brought the warmth of the season to every part of the community to ensure everyone was included in the festivities.

In 2026, MonteCedro will see another significant change when we begin welcoming new residents to the 40 new luxury apartments within four new villa buildings on our campus. Jackie says the addition will be an important milestone in Creative Living. "We will have more residents with wonderful ideas, many who may want to continue their profession by sharing their knowledge, giving lectures, fostering conversation, and contributing to our lifelong learning environment." And the new outdoor spaces will provide additional inspiration for hosting even more events.

New venues, new people, and new ideas equal a bright new outlook for MonteCedro.



# Elevating dementia care at ECS

Lizett Leandro, Vice President, Health & Wellness has been with ECS for 20 years. She began her career as a caregiver, before becoming an LVN and RN, and eventually helped launch The Canterbury's memory care unit.

Her creative approach to education is the foundation of ECS's recent Certified Dementia Practitioner (CDP) training. The multi-day, multi-community program was designed not simply to educate, but to reshape how teams think about dementia care. "The goal was to understand the foundations of dementia – what happens to your brain and your body as dementia progresses — through an intensive workshop around managing the behavioral expressions of dementia," she says.

She envisioned the training a year ago. "We hired two educators who are very well known in the industry," she says, Carrie Chiusano, Executive Director, Dementia Care Center of Excellence, Presbyterian SeniorCare Network and Marcy Keibler, Dementia Education Specialist, Presbyterian SeniorCare Network. The training was delivered in October.

Each community hosted a morning and afternoon session, so as many team members could attend as possible. "We had about 30 people in each session," she says. Each training included:

- A three-and-a-half-hour lecture grounded in real scenarios
- A 30-minute simulation called "Dementia Live 360"
- A guided debrief that helped translate emotion into understanding
- Practical techniques for interpreting behavioral expressions as a form of communication.

The simulation was created to provide Care Partners with a first-hand understanding of the dementia experience so they can start reading these behaviors as communication. To achieve this, participants wore:

- Goggles that simulated macular degeneration
- Headsets that created layers of noise



- Gloves that dulled tactile sensation
- Dried beans in shoes to mimic challenges with balance that comes from peripheral neuropathy.

Four people at a time entered a room. "We gave them seven tasks that were based on activities of daily living: Hang the shirt, sort the socks, tie the shoelaces, put your name here, etc." she says. Most of the participants could barely do two tasks. "Many of them did something completely opposite."

The training tapped into empathy and understanding how exhausting even simple instructions can feel for someone living with dementia.

Lizett also introduced a new means of delivering education through a Virtual Reality system. She presented the program to senior leadership, giving each person the opportunity to wear the VR goggles and experience a resident and Care Partner care-delivery scenario. She was very encouraged by the feedback. Many shared that they were deeply moved to see first-hand what care partners experience each day while supporting the most frail residents.

The VR training brought to life the reality that how we speak doesn't translate in a brain that is suffering memory loss. "Saying: get up, get dressed, put away your clothes all at once is too much," Lizett says. "We need to speak about one task at a time." And residents who are deemed difficult may just be experiencing frustration in not being able to understand or have limited access to vocabulary to express themselves.

Team members left the training with a deeper understanding and empathy for what residents are going through. When they understand the "why" behind a behavior, their response becomes clearer and more effective for everyone.