

# Retirement community celebrates 18 residents who turn 100 or older this year

It's not every day that people get to celebrate a 100th birthday, but one western Michigan community just spent an entire day dedicated to 18 centenarians.

The Sunset Retirement Community in Jenison, Michigan, celebrated the birthdays on Wednesday of 18 residents who turned or will turn 100 or older this year.

---

The big celebration, which included families, friends and residents, has become an annual tradition. Everyone took a group photo, sang "Happy Birthday" and all the centenarians received a picture perfect birthday cake with their names adorned in red icing and sparkling gold-numbered cake toppers.

Tom Rademacher, a spokesman for Sunset Retirement Community, told ABC News that this group of centenarians was delighted to see their birthday celebration on "Good Morning America."

"I think that collectively it was such a moment of joy for them," he said. "For a lot of them, they haven't had this much fun since eating their ice cream cone."

Ahead of the party, some of the 18 centenarians talked about what life is like at 100 years old, reminisced about family memories and offered other life advice they've picked up along the way.

## [Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

"I don't feel any different," said Bernice Zwart, a lively resident at the facility who is 102 years old.

"I never thought of myself as getting old," 100-year-old Lois Oom said, adding, "I'm old."

The birthday cake for 18 centenarians at the Sunset Retirement Community.

Oom said that if she could give a piece of advice to her great-grandchildren, it would be to spread kindness.

"Be kind. Be kind to people. I think you lead a good life so that you feel good about yourself. So in that respect, you can give to others," she explained. "It isn't always easy to live today, you know? There are so many distractions to keep you from that one path that you always wanted to live."

Grace Meyer, 101, said, "I'm most thankful for my health and even though we were poor, we always had plenty to eat."

James Pierce, who has also been around for 101 years, said even now, he's not sure what's next.

(MORE: The Secrets to Living Past 100)

"I can't imagine the next hundred years," he said. "There will be as many changes as there [have been] the past 100 years."

Pierce also shared some helpful tips for a successful marriage.

"Don't argue with the ladies — they're usually right," he said with a smile. "I probably had the best wife in the world, you know, there's none better than her."

As for any secrets to living a long, happy life, he said, "I think it's eating well and just [living a] good, clean, wholesome life."

Hazel May Coy, who will be 100 in December, shared some perspective rooted in faith.

"Live close to the Lord," she recommended. "When you're young, you think you know everything, but as you get older, the Lord means so much more."

The lifelong Detroit Tigers fan said that her current community also "contributes to my longevity."

"There are so many activities going on here, so you can keep just as busy as you want. I play cards twice a week. And I never miss a Tigers game," she said.

18 residents from Sunset Retirement Community in Jenison, Michigan who turned 100 years or older this year had a special birthday celebration.

Robert Keegstra, who is now 100, recalled his his first job.

"I worked for a drugstore when I was in high school," he said, adding that at the time, he earned \$3.50 a week. "I asked them for a raise and I got fired."

Keegstra's advice for his great-grandchildren is to "be honest and work hard."

Jake DeWent, who celebrated his 102nd birthday this year, earned his first dollar working as a hired hand for farmers. He went on to establish what became a very rewarding home construction business after being schooled through just the eighth grade.

"We built 38 homes and there's satisfaction out of producing something that wasn't there before you started — like a house," he said. "There's just a piece of vacant land there, and when you create a home for somebody, there's satisfaction in that."

Birthday decor at a celebration for 18 centenarians at the Sunset Retirement Community in Jenison, Michigan.

Lillian DeBoer, 101, spoke about a simple secret to a long and happy marriage: "Respect one another [and] to honor your vows."

Jeanette Veltman, 101, said there isn't really a formula when it comes to living long and happy.

"It wasn't that I did eat this or I didn't do that because I wanted to be 100," she said. "I think part of it is keeping active and it's all part of God's plan, you know."

Beatrice Gryzen, Ruth Curtis, Bernadine Skripka, Robert Lutz, Jean Homan, Medell Wheat, Wilma Lampen and Ann VandenBosch also turned or will turn 100 or older this year at Sunset Retirement.

Steve Zuiderveen, the president and CEO of Sunset Retirement Communities and Services, said their mission is to "provide quality services for senior adults in a spirit of Christian love."

"We're delighted that more and more of our residents are living longer with more fulfilling lives," he said in a statement. "Offering up birthday wishes to 18 men and women turning 100 or older this year is just frosting on the cake — pun intended."

<https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/story/retirement-community-celebrates-18-residents-turn-100-older-63833573>