



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Wartburg Honors 144 Employees at Annual Staff Service Awards, Celebrating 2,350 Years of Dedication**

Mount Vernon, NY (December 19, 2025) Wartburg Adult Care Community proudly celebrated its most recent Staff Service Awards Reception on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, honoring 144 employees whose combined 2,350 years of service reflect an extraordinary legacy of dedication, compassion, and excellence.

Held annually, the Staff Service Awards recognize employees reaching milestone anniversaries of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 years of service. The event serves as a powerful reminder that Wartburg's mission is sustained by the commitment, talent, and heart of its people.

"As we look ahead to celebrating Wartburg's 160th anniversary in 2026, this event reminds us that our strength has always come from the people who show up every day with skill, kindness, and purpose," said Dr. David Gentner, President & CEO of Wartburg. "These milestones represent more than years of service: they represent relationships built, lives touched, and a culture of care that continues to define Wartburg."

Among this year's honorees were two standout employees whose careers exemplify Wartburg's enduring spirit.

### **45-Year Service Award: Garland Phillips**

Garland's Wartburg journey began in 1979, shortly after graduating from high school in Jamaica, West Indies, when he relocated to Mount Vernon to join his mother, who was already employed at Wartburg. He began his career in the Engineering Department (then known as Maintenance) while simultaneously pursuing his passion for art at The School of Visual Arts in New York City.

In 1981, Garland's artistic talents were formally recognized, leading to a pivotal opportunity in the Therapeutic Recreation Department. Since then, he has dedicated more than four decades to teaching painting classes across nearly every Wartburg building and program - empowering residents, registrants, and patients to explore creativity, self-expression, and new perspectives.

Garland's work has extended beyond the campus, with resident artwork regularly submitted to the New York LeadingAge Art Show, earning multiple honors over the years. Today, he continues to share his gifts with individuals in the Skilled Nursing Facility and Adult Day Program, leaving an indelible mark through art, mentorship, and inspiration.



## 40-Year Service Award: Robert Barnes

A trusted and steady presence in Wartburg's Engineering Department, Robert Barnes began his career in 1985 at the age of 24, learning of the opportunity through his mother, who worked in Environmental Services. Starting as a helper, Robert embraced every chance to learn; absorbing knowledge from senior colleagues who helped shape his technical expertise and strong work ethic.

Encouraged by former Director of Facilities Bob Antonecchia, Robert pursued advanced training at BOCES of Westchester, studying plumbing, electrical systems, and HVAC - skills that have supported Wartburg's operations for decades. Beyond his technical contributions, Robert has served as a union delegate for 1199 since 2001, advocating for and supporting his fellow employees.

"Longevity like this doesn't happen by chance - it's built on mutual respect, opportunity, and a shared sense of purpose," said Melissa Clarke, Director of Human Resources. "Our long-tenured employees are the living history of Wartburg, and their commitment sets the standard for care, professionalism, and community."

Together, Garland, Robert, and all 144 honorees exemplify the heart of Wartburg - a community where dedication is valued, service is celebrated, and every role contributes to a larger mission of care.

### **About Wartburg**

Nestled in Mount Vernon, NY, Wartburg stands apart with its holistic approach to senior living and healthcare. Unlike other adult communities, Wartburg offers a vibrant 34-acre campus where residents enjoy integrated services that extend well beyond typical care. Whether it is independent living, assisted living, rehabilitation or adult day care, Wartburg's continuum of care is designed to meet diverse needs with excellence. Their dedication to families extends beyond medical care, providing robust caregiver support at every stage. Recognized as one of the "Best Nursing Homes in New York State" by U.S. News & World Report for a remarkable fourteen years running, Wartburg continues to set the standard in senior care, fostering a community where well-being thrives. Wartburg's most recent development, the Berkemeier Living Center, features 64 state-of-the-art residences for those living with Alzheimer's Disease and related dementia. Each floor is designed as a small-scale household, providing an intimate and comfortable feel for the residents, staff, and families. Key planning elements such as short walking distances, oversized windows for increased natural light, and enhanced views are included in the design to help support a healing environment. Additionally, each household features its own living, dining and kitchen space, as well as gathering lounges. The ground floor includes an event space, music therapy and creative aging room.

Website: [www.wartburg.org](http://www.wartburg.org)

Facebook: [facebook.com/thewartburg](https://facebook.com/thewartburg)

Instagram: [instagram.com/wartburgadultcare](https://instagram.com/wartburgadultcare)

YouTube: [youtube.com/wartburgny](https://www.youtube.com/wartburgny)

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Michaela Byrnes, Garland Phyllips,



Robert Burns, Dr. David Gentner