It’s four years and counting for the GlamourGals, who have been putting smiles on the faces of Riverview Estates residents one manicure at a time.

The Cinnaminson High School club was started by graduate Carolyn Bresnahan during her junior year.

Bresnahan attended a Hugh O’Brian Youth Leadership Conference the summer prior to junior year.

“After hearing about how amazing the organization was, and realizing that we didn’t have something like this in our community, I decided to start looking into how I could create a GlamourGals chapter in Cinnaminson,” Bresnahan said.

Bresnahan said close to 20 girls attended the first-ever GlamourGals event in December of 2013 at Riverview Estates.
“It was a great success with over 20 residents who were so excited to get their nails and makeup done,” Bresnahan said.

“It was amazing to see how just these two hours that we spent with them clearly made their day. After our first visit, I was so excited to see where GlamourGals was going to go from there.”

Bresnahan is now a sophomore in college, but still thinks about what the club is doing once a month at Riverview Estates.

“Other than a few hiccups along the road, GlamourGals was one of the most amazing things I have ever done,” Bresnahan said. “I built friendships and relationships with every woman that came to one of our events.”

“I learned so much about their past, and was always excited to see returning residents. I had so many women come up to me over the years and thank me for what we were doing. We really didn’t realize how much of an impact we were making on these women.”
This year’s group of girls, 41 strong compared to 18 last year, visit Riverview Estates once per month to provide the residents with manicures.

“The freshman class really seemed to take off,” advisor Jennifer Alvarado said. “We have a lot of freshmen and sophomores. I’m the class advisor for the sophomores, so I’ve been talking it up a lot.”

For the most part, the residents leave their rooms and head to the first floor library/meeting room for their manicure.

The GlamourGals also visit residents in their rooms to chat and provide manicures if they have trouble getting around.

There are typically 20 women who get their nails done each month, which leaves quite a few GlamourGals waiting in the wings.

“The fact that even though not a lot of these girls are actively participating in painting the nails, their presence here is enough to make these women happy, even just to talk to them,” Alvarado said. “They talk about their lives, marriage, if they have children. One woman, who has since passed, was a fighter pilot.”

One of today’s customers (don’t worry it’s all free) was Helen, a spry 90-year-old who waits on the porch each month for the GlamourGals to arrive.

After being introduced to Helen, she made sure to thank Alvarado and the girls for coming again.

“You girls are a treasure. It’s so nice to have you here.”
Helen couldn’t wait to tell me why she enjoys seeing the girls each month.

“I just love to chat with the girls. It’s such a pleasure. We’re getting to know all of them. I stood on the porch and saw them coming. I get my hair done every Friday and then I get my nails done by the girls.”

On Friday, December 16 some of the GlamourGals will visit Riverview Estates with a group of Cub Scouts to sing Christmas carols to the residents, a date Helen is looking forward to quite a bit.

“It was so nice last year. To hear the singing and all. We were following you around the place.”

GlamourGals co-president Rachel Henry, a senior, explained what the club does for the holidays.

“Previous years, we would dress up and give the residents a feel of home. This is the first time we are doing ornaments. For Easter last year we gave them flowers.”

What makes this club so special for Alvarado is the fact that not all of the residents have family who visit, but the girls bring smiles to their faces every month.

“Not all the residents have family that visit. We’re probably their bright light that come to see them once a month. I think some of the girls, who might not have grandparents, almost adopt these women.”

Helen does a little bit of recruiting for GlamourGals, telling residents they should come get their nails done.
“It’s a joy to be with young people,” Helen said. “It’s a joy, it really is. You get away from your room. There’s not much going on on a Sunday.”

The club has co-presidents for the 2016-2017 school year. Along with Henry, junior Abbey Salerno is the other president.

Salerno, the former public relations officer, has learned leadership skills this year to go along with budding relationships.

“I’ve learned a lot of leadership qualities in this club and gained confidence talking to the women,” Salerno said.

“It is really rewarding. You get service hours, but it’s not about that. It says on the back of our shirts ‘Manicures and makeovers are only half the story.’ The biggest part of it is conversing with the women and building relationships.”

Henry spoke about the difference in being a regular member and now holding a leadership position.

“It’s really rewarding. This is my second year doing it. It’s been interesting seeing how the responsibility has changed going from a member to president.”

“You get what you put into it. If you put away your nervousness and have fun with the ladies, it’s really rewarding. You’ll get a lot out of the program.”
Henry couldn’t stress enough how important the club is with the elderly in the community.

“It’s great because we’re all here to support our elders. It shows how we can come together as a community and do something nice for our elderly.”

Alvarado also stressed that the club is not just about helping others and building relationships, but also learning leadership skills.

“I tell the younger girls to think leadership ahead of time. Get involved. We have president, vice president and public relations positions each year.”

The GlamourGals visit Riverview Estates the third Sunday of every month during the school year.

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