

ical clinic in Peru.

Berkebile spent time in Nauta, Peru and Iquitos, Peru, with Springdale Nazarene Church in late June. As a paramedic, he helped provide medical care to Peruvians who oftentimes had nowhere else to turn.

"It was a lot of primary care because they don't have access to doctors the way do," he said.

One case Berkebile said he'll always remember involved a sick 10-month-old boy whose mother had traveled three days by boat so he could be treated.

"They were turned away by the clinic in town because they didn't have any money," he said.

"He was a sick little kid. He had been dehydrated for five days, but we were able to help him. It's pretty exhilarating to know the skills you took there could potentially save a little boy's life."

Berkebile and the other doctors and nurses he was with also handed out free multi-vitamins and parasite medication to anyone who came by their clinics.

"The biggest thing we did was give everybody the parasite medication and the 30- to 60-day supply of multi-vitamins," he said. "They pretty much all have parasites over there so by treating them, we're really

both men showed great courage and compassion.

"They're highly qualified and they put a lot of their heart and soul into it and you see that by their volunteer activities," he said.

"This was (Berkebile's) time and his mission so God bless him. That's just the kind of people we have in Miami Township. They're reaching out to the rest of the world."

Berkebile also said he was touched by how grateful everybody gets bent out of shape when they have to wait, but these people would show up before we opened the clinic in the morning, take a number and sit there until 5 p.m. or 5:30 p.m. and just smile at you," he said. "They never said a word."

Though the firefighter/paramedic said he learned valuable medical lessons, he said most of his experiences taught him something deeper. "Anytime you're using your skills, you're sharpening them," he said.

"The biggest thing I learned is just to be incredibly grateful for what we have here. So many people talk about the health care system being broken and it has its issues, but it's still the best in the world."



PROVIDED

Miami Township firefighter/paramedic Dan Berkebile spent time in Nauta, Peru and Iquitos, Peru, with Springdale Nazarene Church in late June.

# SEM Haven celebrates 30 years

By Kellie Geist  
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When you are at SEM Haven, it doesn't feel like a nursing home. It just feels like home.

And that's exactly what the center's staff is hoping for.

"We try to be more personal and less medical about things," said Administrator Barb Wolf. "We don't have nurses stations and medical carts and our staff is always with the residents."

SEM Haven Health & Residential Care Center is part of the SEM Retirement Communities, which includes SEM Manor, Villa, Terrace, Laurels and Haven. However, SEM Haven, which is more of a nursing home than the other assisted living buildings, has a separate operation and board of directors.

SEM Haven has undergone three major construction projects including when it doubled in size in 2007. This change made it easier for SEM Haven to complete the switch from having a more traditional nursing home operation to a resident-centered operation.

With this new Eden Alternative philosophy, which SEM Haven started working on in 2000, residents are put into households (with about 20 people) complete with more private rooms, living rooms, kitchens, dining rooms and front doors. Residents work with the same people each day and are involved in the household decision-making.

"We believe that no matter how frail you are or what your mental status is, you can make a difference. You can have a say," Wolf said. "That gives meaning to life."

Mary Banks, who has lived at SEM Haven for nine years, said the 2007



KELLIE GEIST/STAFF

SEM Haven residents Edna Tebbe, left, and Mel Chifari, right, danced the day away to Cincinnati's Sinatra Matt Snow's music during the SEM Haven anniversary celebration Sunday, Sept. 26.



KELLIE GEIST/STAFF

The entrance to SEM Haven, which was added in 1995, is on Cleveland Avenue in South Milford.

changes made a huge difference.

"We have so much privacy and it's more home-like in the households," Banks said. "If someone is (looking for a nursing home) I would say look here and see what you can see. That will make up your mind."

Nurse Sheron Jones agrees that SEM Haven is just a special place.

"When you walk in the door, you just feel comforted. You want to be here and I think that's how the staff feels," she said. "This really is a family and we really

care about the residents."

And Jones, who has been at SEM Haven for 29 years, isn't the only long-time staff member.

The center's director of nursing, Helen Canfield, has been at SEM Haven for all 30 years, social worker Caroline Craig has been a staff member for 22 years, Wolf has been with SEM Haven for 11 years and the average nurse has been on staff for eight years. All of the staff members also are cross-trained.

While a majority of the nursing home is for people who need assistance with

## 30th anniversary

SEM Haven's residents, staff and friends celebrated the center's 30th anniversary Sunday, Sept. 26.

U.S. Rep. Jean Schmidt, Milford Mayor Ralph Vitaro Jr., Milford council member Charlene Hinners and Clermont County Commissioner Ed Humphrey attended.

Entertainment was provided by Cincinnati's Sinatra Matt Snow.

SEM Haven is an independent non-profit ministry for older adults. The center is governed by a volunteer board of directors.

SEM Haven opened its doors in 1980 with 100 beds and has since undergone three major construction projects.

SEM Haven Health & Residential Care Center is at 225 Cleveland Avenue in South Milford and can be reached at 248-1270 or visit the website at [www.semcommunities.org](http://www.semcommunities.org).

every day tasks, there is a household available for people with severe Alzheimer's or other memory-related conditions, a short-term rehabilitation household, and an assisted-living household.