

# THE FRONT PORCH

*All the happy happenings at Cotton Grove Estate*



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## Pope Francis Establishes World Day For Grandparents & Elderly

No one can deny that grandparents and their grandchildren share a unique connection. In fact, that special bond has been proven to both make grandparents live longer and make children more emotionally resilient. Now, a new world holiday promises not just to honor the relationship between grandparent and grandchild, but to promote the connection between the elderly and the younger generation.

Pope Francis has announced that the fourth Sunday in July will henceforth be celebrated as the World Day honoring grandparents and the elderly. This year, the date will fall on July 25th. The Holy Father chose this date as it falls close to the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus.

The elderly, Pope Francis said, “remind us that old age is a gift and that grandparents are the link between the different generation, to pass on to the young the experience of life.”



The Holy Father emphasized the importance of grandparents and grandchildren getting to know one another, as he believes it is necessary to bridge the gap between the elderly and younger generations. He said he instituted the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly because “grandparents are often forgotten, and we forget this wealth of preserving roots and passing on” what the elderly have received.

Read More at [CottonGroveEstate.com](https://CottonGroveEstate.com)

## Caregiver Spotlight: Lolita Avitia

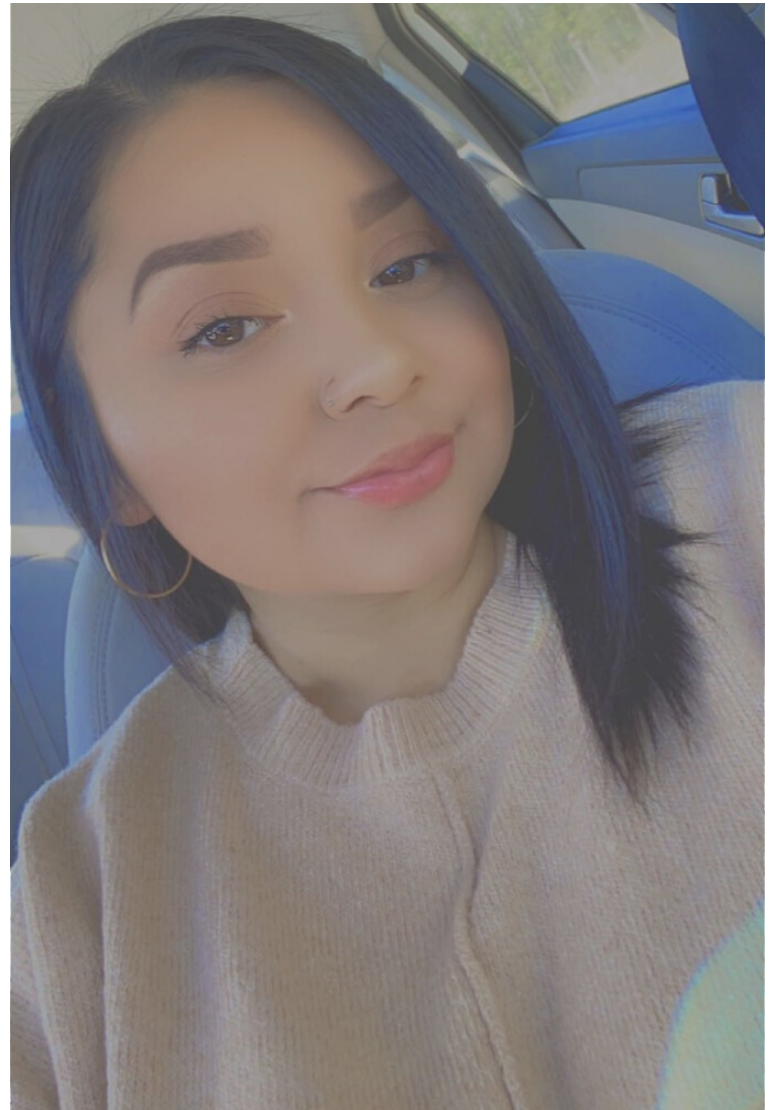
The team at Cotton Grove Estate would like to recognize the hard work and dedication to excellence of Ms. Lolita Avitia!

Lolita has been a valued member of the CGE team since September 2020. She made an immediate impression on General Manager Vanessa Wilder, who knew within moments that Lolita would make a wonderful caregiver. Since then, she has been a standout employee who takes initiative and can always be counted on.

According to Lolita, working at Cotton Grove has been "one of the most amazing experiences" she has ever had. She loves working at Cotton Grove because she enjoys the opportunity to hone new skills and learn from the other inspiring women on the caregiving team.

Lolita is also an animal lover! She has two dogs who are named Sophia and Boots, and a turtle named Jenny.

Thank you, Lolita, for all that you do for our residents!





# Remembering Mrs. Marilyn Ray

The Cotton Grove family has lost a precious angle, Mrs. Marilyn Ray, who went to her forever home on Monday, February 22nd. She was 80-years-old.

Mrs. Marilyn was one of nine children and was raised on a farm where her family grew tobacco and raised cattle. Despite working long hours on the family farm everyday, Mrs. Marilyn was a star student. When she graduated from high school, she received a call from the local John Deere outfit in Hazlehurst. The high school had recommended her and the company called to offer her a position as a bookkeeper. Mrs. Marilyn accepted that job with John Deere and went on to work there for 50 years. Her work ethic and dedication were truly admirable.

Mrs. Marilyn was an active member of her church and a very good square dancer. She will be dearly missed by her best friend of 50 years, Mrs. Claire McLendon. The pair met at the beauty shop in Hazlehurst in 1971 and became fast friends when Claire told Marilyn, "You know, you're pretty, but I'm prettier!" It was this playful humor that inspired a friendship which ultimately spanned five decades.

Mrs. Claire cared for Mrs. Marilyn when she was diagnosed with cancer three times. Each time, Mrs. Claire moved Mrs. Marilyn into her home and nursed her back to health.

Mrs. Marilyn was also exceptionally close to Mrs. Claire's granddaughter, Ashley McLendon, who is pictured above. Although she never had any children of her own, Mrs. Marilyn was every bit a grandmother to Ashley, and Ashley took a very active role in her ongoing care, for which Mrs. Marilyn was very grateful.

The moment Mrs. Marilyn came to us at Cotton Grove Estate, the staff fell in love. She was the perfect combination of sweet and feisty, with the clearest crystal blue eyes of anyone we'd ever seen. Mrs. Claire would call them her "devilish blue eyes" because when she cracked a sly side smile and looked straight at you, you'd be hard-pressed to look away.

The entire team at Cotton Grove would like to express our most sincere gratitude for the opportunity to know sweet Mrs. Marilyn, and we would like to thank Mrs. Claire and Ashley for entrusting us with her care. We feel so blessed to have known her and cared for her, and even though we mourn her loss, we are comforted to know that she is finally resting easy in the arms of her Lord and Savior.







## Valentine's Day Cookie Decorating

At Cotton Grove Estate, we never miss an opportunity to celebrate a holiday, and Valentine's Day is one of our favorites! We just love the opportunity to make memories with our sweet residents.

This year, the caregivers planned a special cookie decorating party! We all got together to visit and make some heart-shaped treats.

Activities like this one and the many others offered at Cotton Grove aren't just a great way to celebrate - they also help our residents exercise their small motor skills.

Small motor skills can prove difficult to maintain as age progresses, but we are always working to find creative ways that our residents can preserve them without even noticing!







## A Message From Anna

*"The driving force behind everything we do is to treat each resident the way the person who loves them the most would."*

Anna Pittard

Hello, Friends!

A few weeks ago, I was visiting with my good friend Jenna, when the conversation turned to Cotton Grove, as it so often does. I must have been telling her something about our special caregivers, because she shared with me that she had once served as a personal caregiver for an elderly woman from Palm Springs, California.

Jenna told me of how she would look forward to her shifts, when she would sit beside the woman for hours on end and listen - completely enthralled - to her stories. These were the types of stories that could have easily made for a best-selling novel or an Academy Award winning film; they were the true tales of a life well-lived.

The woman was from Ireland, and she told Jenna that she and her family had been part of a political resistance party that stood in rebellion of the government. In order to fly under the radar, but also signal to other families that they were allied with the same cause, members of the resistance would name one of their sons Emmett.

Jenna, who was pregnant at the time, found out she was carrying a boy and it did not take her long to decide to name him Emmett.

As time went on and the elderly woman's condition deteriorated, she was eventually moved to a stereotypical assisted living facility - the kind you dread leaving your loved one at. Jenna would visit her there and cringe over the way she was treated. She would beg the nurses to allow the woman outside, even if just for a moment, to get some fresh air and lift her spirits. Most of the time, her pleas fell on deaf ears.

## A Message From Anna, Cont.

It was heartbreaking to listen as Jenna recalled the final months of this woman's life; this woman she had come to love as a mother, and who had made such a lasting impression on her that it inspired her son's name. Perhaps even more heartbreaking was knowing that stories like this are not uncommon. Sadly, they've become the norm. They are the expectation, when they should be the exception.

And then something wonderfully ironic happened.

The morning after I had this conversation with Jenna, one of the sweet caregivers at Cotton Grove sent me this photo of Mrs. Vickie relaxing outside and enjoying her favorite music. What perfect timing!

It was precisely what my heart needed.

Jenna's story reminded me of the special bond our caregivers at Cotton Grove share with their "babies" - the residents they care for. Our mission here is to treat each resident the way the person who loves them the most would, and that's not just a slogan on our website. It is manifested in everything we do, from the home-cooked meals we prepare from scratch to the birthdays that are never forgotten.

At Cotton Grove, residents are doted upon. The caregivers make sure to keep their favorite treats on hand, they worry about them on their days "off," and they certainly would never discourage anyone from getting some fresh air and taking in the beauty of our spectacular 50-acre property.

What we have here is so special. I only wish everyone could experience our magic for themselves. But I suppose I will have to content myself with knowing that for those we are able to help, we provide an atmosphere and lifestyle that is second to none. And I will continue working toward providing the Cotton Grove experience to as many people in our community as possible... maybe even beyond that someday. Because these babies deserve the very best.

Warmly,

Anna Pittard  
Owner, Cotton Grove Estate

