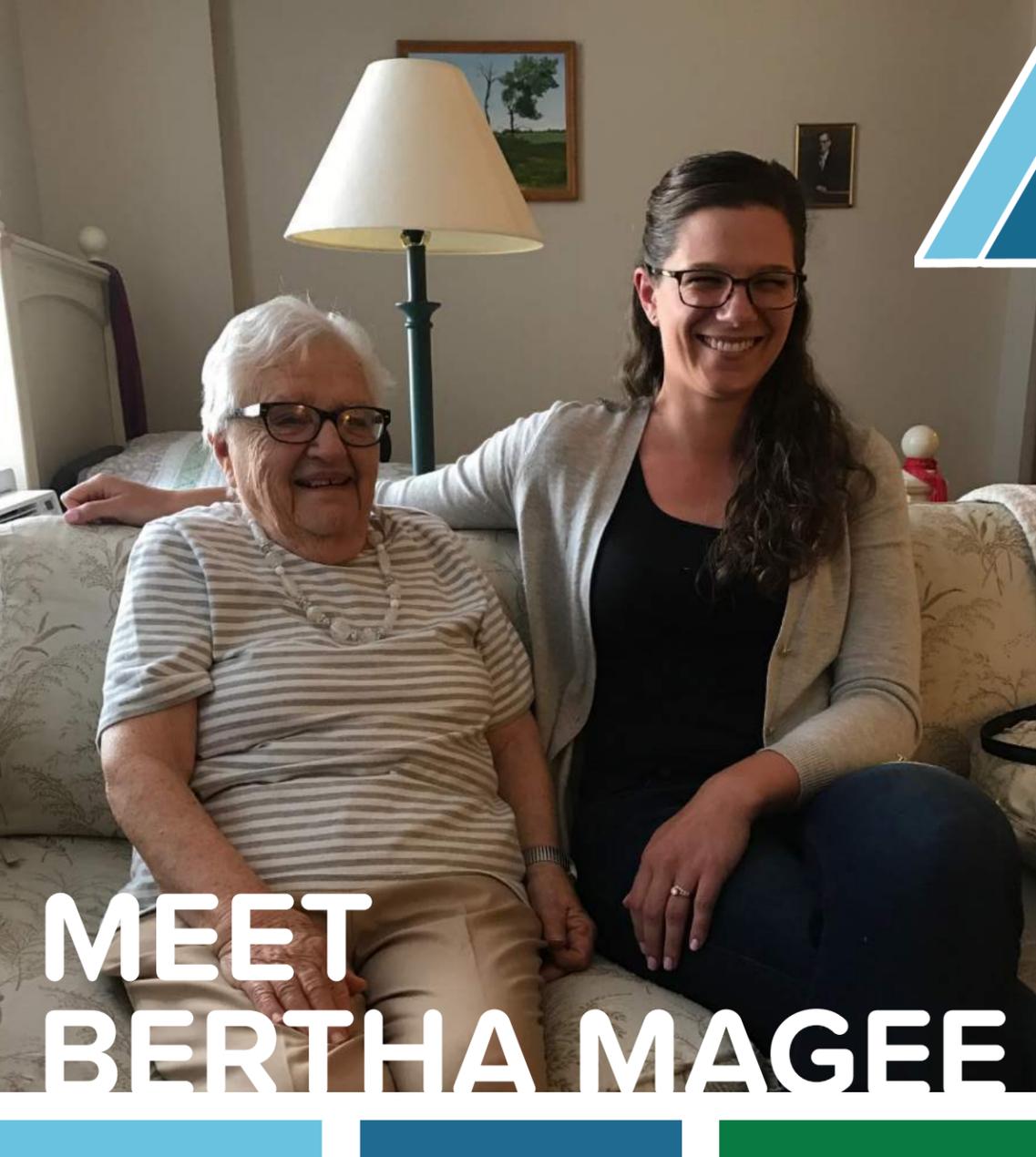




# Empowering People With Vision Loss



## MEET BERTHA MAGEE

**At 4'8"**, 93-year-old Bertha Magee is small in stature, but certainly not short of personality. Today, Bertha resides at the Eaton Senior Communities in Lakewood, Colorado. As a client of A3, she is visited twice a month by Sally, a volunteer with the organization who has been helping Bertha with her visual impairment ever since A3 matched them together.

Bertha was diagnosed with macular degeneration only four or five years ago. "Not as long ago as you might think, but it went downhill faster than most people," Bertha recalls. "I kept seeing this black spot and ignoring it, and then one day I couldn't see a thing."

Born in Nebraska in 1924, Bertha has lived in a number of states across the US over her 93 years before making her way to Colorado. Her husband, Dale, was a dam inspector and the Magees, including their two daughters, moved every three to six years when a new dam project arose.

"It was not as easy a life as it could have been. We lived in Utah, Texas,

Oregon, Washington, and Colorado," Bertha says. "It was hard on the girls moving around."

But it wasn't all difficult--Bertha worked odd jobs here and there and enjoyed the opportunity to keep busy. She and Dale liked to bowl, just the two of them, as well as be by the water.

"Dale was an ice skater, so we spent a lot of time on the lakes, even though I didn't skate and he wasn't very good," Bertha chuckles.

Bertha has now lived in Colorado for almost 17 years. Before coming to Eaton Senior Communities and being connected with A3, she enjoyed living independently until she realized just how bad her vision was getting.

"It got to the point where I couldn't cook; there was a lot of things I couldn't do anymore with the eyesight like it was," says Bertha. "I would go to the grocery store and freak out because I couldn't read the labels anymore."

Now, A3 is playing a big role in helping Bertha recoup some of her independence, thanks to the time and dedication of people like Sally. Sally has close-ties to the visual impairment community; she grew up in California on the same block as the San Diego Center for the Blind, and then later, at age 22, had a spontaneous full retinal detachment in her left eye.

"It's interesting to wake up at 22 with no vision, because you think you're invincible. That really solidified my focus on working with the visually impaired," Sally says.

Now she has found her place with A3. "Working with A3 has been very positive. They are incredibly organized and very grateful to their volunteers. The organization also puts a lot of time and effort into matching people by getting to really know both the client and volunteers," she says.

"I think we're a really good match," Bertha adds. "She's very kind and patient. And



she brings me pineapple and goodies. She's been a real blessing."

Sally visits every two weeks and helps Bertha with the day-to-day things that low vision makes a little more difficult. "We will open the mail, go through that, and also file things accordingly. Usually we will do a crossword puzzle together--which Bertha is very good at. Or we'll listen to a book on tape, or I'll read from one out loud," Sally says.



Bertha adores her "talking books," but she also loves to get up and move. The two of them will often take long walks around the community grounds.

"I don't know what I would do without her," Bertha says. "She's an amazing young lady. I wish she was my daughter, but she's too tall," she adds with a chuckle.

As far as A3 goes, Bertha does wish she had known about the organization sooner, when she was still living in her previous home. "A3 would have been a great benefit when I first started to lose my vision. I went too long and lost an eye, and I could just kick myself. So check," she says, her words of wisdom to others like her. "Just check your vision and visit your doctor often. Watch your eyesight." ■