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**Innovative Audubon Program Connects Elders with Alzheimer's to the Outdoors
While Creating Healthy Bird Habitats**

New York, NY (February 6, 2013) - Today Health Professions Press announced the release of Bird Tales, a low cost, high-impact program to improve the lives of people living with Alzheimer's disease. The program was developed by dementia-care expert Randy Griffin in partnership with the National Audubon Society, Toyota, and TransCon.

Bird Tales: A Program for Engaging People with Dementia through the Natural World of Birds, by Randy Griffin, R.N., M.S., HNC (Health Professions Press, \$89.95), uses multisensory stimulation and the outdoor world of birds to help people living with dementia share a meaningful experience with others while also providing local bird populations with newly improved habitats. The program includes a program guide and educational DVD that take long-term care professionals and community organizations step-by-step through simple ways of improving the outdoor spaces of residential care communities and promoting environmentally conscious practices while helping residents interact with their environment.

In today's nursing homes and assisted living facilities, more than half the residents may have some level of Alzheimer's disease or other dementia and struggle to stay connected to their surroundings. With 5.4 million Americans now living with the debilitating effects of Alzheimer's disease, communities across the country are striving to keep these citizens meaningfully engaged and active.

"Nature is one of our best medicines," said Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold. "The Bird Tales program brings peace and joy to people living with dementia by connecting them with the healing power of birds. And at the same time, by encouraging facilities managers to create bird-friendly habitats, the program gives birds a boost too."

Dementia consultant Randy Griffin and Audubon educator Ken Elkins created the Bird Tales program, with its unique blend of education and programming around the needs of people with dementia and of native bird populations. Long-term care provider TransCon provided financial and operational support to develop and pilot the Bird Tales program in four of its care communities in Connecticut.

With the further goal of bringing the innovative Bird Tales program to a wider audience, Griffin and Elkins secured additional support from the National Audubon Society's Toyota TogetherGreen program to produce an implementation guide.

The newly released *Bird Tales* kit combines the best practices in dementia care with the therapeutic powers of nature, encouraging residents to do simple projects that improve outdoor spaces, create and maintain healthy habitats for birds, and engage in multisensory experiences inspired by birds. While helping to protect and maintain the local environment, the Bird Tales program also includes educational content that builds on participants' past connections to the natural world by involving them in watching and feeding the birds, and learning about different species using the *Bird Tales Activity Cards* and activity lessons provided in the *Bird Tales* kit.

With the ever-growing elderly population and changes in the regulatory environment for elder care, long-term care communities are experiencing pressure to find new and innovative ways to keep residents engaged and active, especially those with advanced dementia. Increasing emphasis on person-centered care approaches has also incited a call for programs that offer meaningful engagement for all residents, with appropriate adaptations to meet every resident's needs and abilities. Nature-based programs can provide an answer to this need by creatively engaging the senses while promoting connection to nature and the active cultivation of outdoor community spaces.

"We saw profound effects when we implemented the Bird Tales program," says TransCon's Vice President Mario Sinicariello. "Residents were responsive and excited in ways staff had never seen before. I applaud Toyota for getting engaged in something different than automobiles."

TransCon has embraced a culture change in caring for its residents with memory impairment through a far-reaching Dementia Ambassadors Program developed by Randy Griffin in partnership with the Connecticut Alzheimer's Association. By first offering intensive training to 32 employees, and then enabling those ambassadors to train scores of colleagues across all disciplines, TransCon is making inspiring breakthroughs with many residents, and *Bird Tales* is one example.

Audubon's Toyota TogetherGreen program is changing the face of conservation to reflect the country's diversity and vibrancy—and doing it in a way that ensures long-term success. Since 2008 Toyota and Audubon, through Toyota TogetherGreen, have funded innovative community-based conservation projects, trained environmental leaders, and engaged volunteers in opportunities that significantly benefit the environment.

For more information or to purchase the Bird Tales product, visit the Health Professions Press website at www.healthpropress.com/birdtales.

Watch a video of the Bird Tales program in action: <http://bit.ly/audubonbirdtales>

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About Audubon

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. (www.audubon.org).

About Health Professions Press, Inc

Health Professions Press, Inc. (Baltimore, Maryland) is a publisher of high-quality educational resources for professionals in the fields of aging, long-term care, and health services administration. Visit www.healthpropress.com to learn more about this independent company, its vision, mission, and ever-growing list of publications. (www.healthpropress.com)

About TransCon

TransCon touches countless individuals and families in Connecticut through its family of six homes offering short-term rehabilitation, long-term care, assisted living and dementia care. For more than 30 years, TransCon staff members have developed highly regarded expertise in creating living environments for senior adults. In recent years, their “special calling ... to transcend quality care standards by responding to each resident’s unique personal history and set of needs” has reached new levels of dedication and imagination. (www.transconbuilders.com)

Randy L. Griffin, RN, MS, HNC, is an expert in the field of dementia care with more than 30 years of experience—ranging from nursing and nutritional services to program development and health care administration. (www.randy-griffin.com)