

Adding to Serenity

Slinger assisted living facility growing

By AMANDA VOSS - Daily News

Jan. 7, 2015



Evelyn Rady grabs the hand of Carrie Uselding, activities director, after playing a game of dice at Serenity Villa Assisted Living Facility on Tuesday afternoon in Slinger. Serenity Villa Assisted Living opened their third building recently.

Photos by John Ehлке

SLINGER — Tracy Ermer jumped at the opportunity to open an assisted living facility in 2009. Five years later, the owner of Serenity Villa Assisted Living in Slinger opened a third building last week.

Ermer said Serenity Villa is set up to help the disabled, the terminally ill, the elderly and people with dementia.

"I've always wanted to open my own hospice from when my grandma died on hospice years ago with Lou Gehrig's (disease)," Ermer said. "That's something that inspired me to go back to school, to be a nurse and work in the hospice arena, which I did for years. I have a passion for the elderly."

There are 26 beds in each building, including the third, at 1707 American Eagle Drive. There are private and semiprivate rooms and the community is mixed.

"We just feel it works really well," Ermer said on why Serenity Villa Assisted Living offers a mixed community. "We have our people that are completely alert, oriented sometimes looking out for those with memory care and each diagnosis brings different backgrounds to the table."



**The new addition to Serenity Villa Assisted Living Facility on Tuesday afternoon in Slinger.
Serenity Villa Assisted Living opened their third building recently.**
Photos by John Ehlke

West Bend resident Sandy Ferron's mother, Patsy Tews, is a resident. She said her mother has dementia and she couldn't be happier about Serenity Villa Assisted Living.

Serenity Villa offers a memory care facility. Ermer said some of her staff are certified Alzheimer's caregivers. Ermer is a certified Alzheimer's educator and a certified dementia practitioner.

"The staff is absolutely amazing," Ferron said. "They love all the residents."

She said Tews had an emergency and the staff, including Ermer, was quick to assist.

West Bend resident Ben Kraemer's mother, Nancy Kraemer, is another resident with dementia.

"It's all been good," Ben Kraemer said. "They enjoy my mom. They've taken good care of her."



**Sun shines on one of the front rooms at Serenity Villa Assisted Living Facility on
Tuesday afternoon in Slinger.**
Photos by John Ehlke

Serenity Villa was recommended to Kraemer by a friend. He initially placed his mother in another assisted living facility in West Bend because Serenity Villa was full, but the West Bend facility didn't have the resources to take care of her.

"I found whenever my mom has a health or emotional issue they are very quick to call," Kraemer said. "I appreciate that."

Ferron also likes the fact that her mother will be at Serenity Villa until her death and won't be moved, which Ferron said could be traumatic.

Serenity Villa offers a bus for outings to places like Cabela's in Richfield or bowling and shopping.

"We really want to maintain everyone's independence regardless of their disease process," Ermer said. "We're getting them out and doing things they did all their life."

Ferron said Tews enjoyed the field trips to the Washington County Fair and boat rides.

A pastor on staff holds a weekly Bible study and Ermer said they try to incorporate other spiritual needs and religions.

"Our residents come first," Ermer said. "We do a lot specifically for them. We do several parties a year. We try to pay importance to their anniversaries and birthdays."

"If you have good food and good activities, you have happy residents," she added.



A candle holder with the Serenity Villa title on the front at Serenity Villa Assisted Living Facility on Tuesday afternoon in Slinger.
Photos by John Ehлке

Ermer said it took six months to build each building and she wanted to make residents feel like they are at home and comfortable.

"I want them to feel calm, so we chose calming colors and calming decor throughout the building. Lots of light," Ermer said.

The newest building features a front sitting room with couches, a fireplace and tables.

Ermer said the building is a big square, which is comforting for dementia patients.

Ermer said when someone is anxious or confused it's nice to turn on some soft music and soak in their whirlpool, which changes their anxiety level.

There is a dining room and a private dining area for residents to invite their families.

"It's important for us to keep them feeling like they have a choice and they can still make their own decisions," Ermer said. There is a room in the back with a large television, which leads to an outdoor patio area. The back of the building faces Highway 60 and Ermer said residents love to watch the traffic.

In a typical room residents bring their belongings and they can put pictures on the walls. Ermer said she wants it to look like home.

Ermer said Slinger was chosen because West Bend was saturated and she didn't feel there were a lot of choices in the Slinger area.

Ermer waited about four years until she opened the third building at Serenity Villa.

"I'm very active with all of the admissions and with all the families and all the residents and I don't want to lose that touch," Ermer said. "So we stayed put for four years before we built this one. We had such a need for more in this area. So, we opened last week and we were half full opening."

Ermer said she would encourage people to come to Serenity Villa because the resident comes first.

"We want to do what's best for them and we try to keep people the rest of their life and so as the disease progresses we don't have to send them somewhere else. Our goal is to keep them here in their home."

"My staff is amazing and we do a lot of education with them and disease process and end of life. They do very well with that and maintaining the resident's dignity. So, I do think we are different in several areas," she added.

For more information about Serenity Villa Assisted Living, call 262-644-0720 or visit www.serenityvilla.org