

Crozet's Mountainside Senior Living Adds Dementia Unit

By **Michael Marshall** - September 8, 2017



Mountainside Senior Living in downtown Crozet (Photo: Mike Marshall)

Mountainside Senior Living, a 105-bed assisted living facility in downtown Crozet, will convert its entire third floor to a secure dementia unit containing 20 beds, according to Marta Keene, executive director of the Jefferson Area Board for Aging, which operates the facility with the aim of keeping affordable senior care available. The unit is expected to open in February of 2018, she said.

"Patients will stay on the floor for all activities," she said. "Meals will be served family-style. There will a large common area that will overlook The Square. There will be 'stations' that allow patients to do safe projects, such as crafts. It's going to be very personalized. They are not connecting with the present moment and they don't need to be brought back to it.

"It's recognizing that we have to find the personal things we can tap into to help them," said Keene. "The key is personalizing it."

The unit will also have a "snuzzle room," a low-stimulation room that's kept very quiet and has dimmable lighting. Dementia patients will also be able to go outdoors to another secure area—namely the patio on the north side of the building where trains rumble by—if accompanied by an aide. The balconies on the floor will be sealed off from the rooms, except in the common area space where the balconies will be incorporated and windows added. Each room will have a private bath with handrails and a walk-in tub. Eighty regular assisted living rooms will remain after the conversion.

Keene said that another goal is to allow the "[patients' current] caregivers a chance to return to their prior relationship as being the wife or husband or daughter and not simply the caregiver."

"People won't have to leave [Mountainside] now if they develop dementia," she noted. Two current patients are expected to move to the new unit when it opens.

"We'll be instituting all the best practices," Keene said. "We're visiting other facilities now to learn what works best." The unit will use Teepa Snow positive approach techniques and all daily care will be provided by certified dementia care practitioners.

A market study on the Charlottesville-area need for dementia care estimated that there are 400 local residents in need of such a facility, Keene said. The Lodge at Old Trail operates the only other dementia unit in Crozet, with 16 beds.

Mountainside's dementia unit beds will go for \$4,800 per month. Deposits are being taken now.

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