

# The HERALD-NEWS

## Stadalsky: Memory care facility will help those with dementia

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Shorewood Mayor Richard Chapman called me with a heads up a few weeks ago about the opening of the Alden Courts Memory Care Center, located next door to Alden Estates Rehabilitation Center.

“It’s such a huge event for Shorewood, we don’t have a facility in the area that deals with memory loss and intensive memory care,” Chapman said.

I’m a baby-boomer myself, and my own mom is in her mid-80s. She’s very fortunate to be able to live in her own home despite a bad fall several years ago that left her with a brain bleed and some short-term memory problems.

Mom attends an adult day care center in Michigan twice a week, which keeps her social life going, and she has a caregiver who comes to her home three afternoons a week to help with chores and errands.

I know other people who have struggled with worse memory problems, some with Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia. My grandmother had Parkinson’s and dementia is part of that disease.

The memory care center was built for those seeking short-term rehabilitation and post-acute care with memory needs.

Center Director Ashley Bolyn said the facility was designed with the specific needs of the residents in mind.

The designer worked with Dr. Jennifer Stelter, a clinical psychologist and certified dementia practitioner and trainer with Alden’s Network, to create an environment that makes day-to-day living easier for a person with memory issues, keeps them independent and at their highest functioning level as long as possible.

For instance, the carpeting in the three “neighborhoods” of the facility is green, a color that dementia patients can differentiate. As they go through the hallways, following the green helps them navigate and feel safe, said Bolyn.

Different colors are used for each piece of residents' bedding – one color for the flat sheet, one for the fitted, and still another for the comforter. That way they can differentiate that there are layers between the comforter and sheets and lay in the bed instead of on top.

In the dining room, bold, red plates are used because the color stimulates appetites.

Research shows an increase of 25 percent in food consumption with red plates. The scent of citrus fills the room and serves as an olfactory cue that it is meal time.

In private bedrooms, the bathroom door is actually a curtain. That eliminates the confusion of which is the bathroom and which is the exit door.

Daily schedules include all types of therapies, such as aromatherapy, pet therapy, horticulture, art and music sessions. The facility strives for non-pharmacological approaches to care through sensory stimulation and other alternative therapies.

“Everything has been really thought out,” Bolyn said. “We really took a holistic approach to the building and programming.”

The need for memory care facilities is growing as the population ages and the medical community makes advances in diagnosing Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, Bolyn said.

Bolyn is excited to start accepting residents in March. She has been with Alden Estates since she was in college in several capacities. She is certified as a dementia practitioner, recreation therapist and activity professional.

“I have a passion for helping people,” Bolyn said. “(Alzheimer's patients) need special people to help them through their journey of dementia, and I want to be part of that journey.”

- Kris Stadalsky writes about people and issues in areas southwest of Joliet. Reach her at [writestuff56@comcast.net](mailto:writestuff56@comcast.net).

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