

West Hartford Native Hopes To Expand Alzheimer's And Dementia Agency In Bishops Corner



Julianne Roth Founder of Companions for Living LLC.



By **Mikaela Porter** · Contact Reporter

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WEST HARTFORD — The founder and president of a specialized **Alzheimer's** and dementia care agency is looking to build her business and move to a new space in Bishops Corner next fall.

West Hartford native Julianne Roth founded the agency, Companions for Living, LLC, about 11 years ago. She started the business out of her home while living in North Granby.

"What sets us apart is we are a specialized agency, we're a boutique agency and we specialize in memory care," Roth said. She has her employees trained by an outside agency through Hebrew Health Care. "It's not dementia-101, it's more how to work with people where they are in any given moment — we basically teach them how to speak dementia."

There are 575 Connecticut homemaker and companion agencies registered with the Department of Consumer Protection and another 14 registered with DCP from out of the state who work with clients in Connecticut. But according to Pamela Atwood, a gerontologist and Director of Dementia Services at Hebrew Health Care, not all offer the level of services Companions for Living does.

Atwood has worked with the aging community the past 30 years and since 2009 has trained thousands of caregivers for certified dementia practitioner certification, and has worked with Companions for Living the past two years as a consultant, reviewing policies, procedures and staff training. She said homemaker and companion agencies don't have an oversight or regulatory body to oversee their training, so services at these agencies can vary.

"[Roth] went above and beyond," Atwood said. "It's not required that they do any kind of dementia training and she focused her whole business in this. ... It's constant innovation, constantly assessing her clients needs and interests and really focusing on quality of life."

Roth declined to say how many clients Companions for Living works with, but did say that the majority of her clients are over 80-years-old and most are women.

Roth said more than 5 million Americans are currently diagnosed with Alzheimer's and that doctors are seeing more and more cases of early-onset Alzheimer's and dementia.

Roth graduated from Hall High School in 1984.

She opened Companions for Living, LLC in the fall of 2005. Roth started her business with four part-time employees and has grown to about 100 employees today, she said.

After two years in North Granby, she moved her business back to West Hartford — to the old armory building on Farmington Avenue. About two years later, she moved again to her current location — the corner of Farmington Avenue and Mountain Road — and is now looking to build a new space off North Main Street in Bishops Corner.

Town councilors last week unanimously approved plans for Companions for Living to build a new facility at 312 North Main St., between the shopping center and a residential area. The facility — a two-and-a-half story, about 3,360-square-foot building — will be constructed to look like a single-family home on the 0.28-acre parcel.

The council also approved a zoning change for the site — from residential to residential office and made it a special development district.

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