

The Morrison Implements New Approach to Dementia Care

WHITEFIELD — During 2019, The Morrison Communities initiated a comprehensive approach to dementia care to equip staff and families with important tools that can be used in caring for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Building on these successes, a number of additional initiatives will be implemented in the coming year that will positively impact residents' lives.

The statistics are sobering, says Mary Bates, MS, CT, the Director of the Memory Care Community at Summit by Morrison and Director of Social Services at The Morrison Skilled Nursing Facility. Currently, every 65 seconds someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's Disease and one in three seniors dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia, she notes. A cure has yet to be found.

“To better serve our Memory Care residents and their families, we have introduced an innovative program at The Morrison that is sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association, Massachusetts/New Hampshire Chapter,” says Bates. “Designed as a practical approach to Alzheimer's understanding and care, the program trains the trainers, who in turn share the easy-to-use methods with staff and others responsible for the care of individuals living with dementia.” Topics include the physical environment, personal care, behavior as a form of communication, activities and purposeful engagement, and caring for oneself as caregivers.

From the beginning, The Morrison Communities decided to include all staff in the Dementia Education Program because each and every person interacts on a regular basis with the residents — nurses, administrators, cooks, housekeepers and maintenance crew. By the end of the year, 94 percent of staff had completed the training provided by the Dementia Education team.

Realizing that families would also benefit from the training, The Morrison Communities presented spring and fall sessions of a “Community Dementia Education Program.” These were so well received that additional sessions are planned for 2020.

“Our success with the Dementia Education Program is exciting,” says Bates. “It is so practical and easy to use and gives staff and families additional tools to work with and provides a more comprehensive approach to dementia care.”

Based on the success of the program to date, The Morrison Communities has identified additional objectives for the coming year that will positively impact residents' lives.

“These objectives will be realized if we have a successful annual appeal currently going on to fund the advancement of dementia education and care for our residents,” says Brian Fogg, President of The Morrison Communities Board of Trustees.

- Increasing staff capacity by bringing in outside experts like Teepa Snow, one of the world's leading educators on dementia care, for on-site training, and providing more opportunity for training at regional and national workshops and gatherings to expand the staff's network and knowledge in the field.

- Expanding and promoting the Community Dementia Education series throughout the year by providing The Morrison Community trainers with more hands-on tools to improve their ability to teach, along with developing solutions to obstacles that might limit someone from attending, like transportation or care for their loved one with dementia.
- Investing in enhanced activities to improve the Memory Care Program by adding life skill stations that engage residents in familiar tasks and routine activities, sparking memories and creating activities that encourage interest, movement and interaction. These prompt the mind to focus on experiences from earlier times in their lives, improving their demeanor as they gain a sense of purpose through participating in familiar pursuits. Examples might include: Post office, kitchen, laundry, grocery store and baby station.
- Collaborating with local community partners to develop best practices for creating a Dementia Friendly Community with the goal of increasing awareness and understanding of dementia-type diseases, removing the stigma of dementia, and improving the lives of dementia affected individuals and their caregivers.

“We can’t afford not to do this,” says Fogg. “Expanding our Memory Care program through our dementia education initiatives builds on our commitment to our residents, their families and the community to meet health care challenges head on, and providing additional care options for our staff and families can only enrich the lives of our residents living with dementia.”

The Morrison Communities is a non-profit 501©(3) charitable community that has been providing quality healthcare to residents of New Hampshire’s North Country since 1903. For more information, go to www.themorrisoncommunities.org