

NEWS RELEASE



Waterford at Harwood Groves

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Waterford introducing new service for people with early memory loss

FARGO, N.D. — Joyce Rivinius was a full-time caretaker for her husband, Melvin, for four years. A year ago, at 82, she and her family realized that Melvin needed more care than she could provide. Melvin, 85, now lives at Waterford at Harwood Groves and receives specialized care and support for his age-related dementia.

“It just got too hard,” says Joyce. “I couldn’t lift him when he fell – and he fell several times. I couldn’t get him into the shower. And I never slept well, since he would get up at 4 am and want to shower and go somewhere.”

She explains that after she had surgery last year, she lost about 12 pounds in 10 days, and she finally understood that she couldn’t shoulder the responsibility any longer. Indeed, her health was declining as a result of the physical, emotional and mental strain.

“Now I feel more rested. I go visit him every day and spend about two to three hours with him, and he’s so happy at Waterford. This is home to him. The CNAs are wonderful, and he knows them and laughs with them. It’s a perfect place for him.”

Waterford at Harwood Groves is launching a new service – a customized neighborhood for people in the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease or other age-related dementia illness. It’s believed this is the first of its kind in the Fargo area.

When asked about the new early memory care support, Joyce says it would have been helpful to have it available several years ago. “I definitely would have used it,” she says.

Dawn Papenfuss already is using it. She just moved her 76-year-old mother into the new neighborhood called Pembroke – Becky Thompson is the first resident there.

Initially, the addition includes three private studios with full bathrooms and two one-bedroom, one-bath apartments. Waterford is looking to increase that number to 15.

Waterford Executive Director Kari Dick explains these residences are specifically designed to meet the needs of people who no longer can live alone and/or whose family needs relief from 24-hour care giving.

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“This new service will be a tremendous help to families,” she says, explaining that it will provide appropriate levels of stimulation and support in a smaller and more intimate area than an assisted-living setting.

Dick describes the service as a bridge between needs. “It’s for individuals who don’t require fully secured memory care but who need more assistance than they’re currently getting, whether that’s in a private home or an assisted living environment,” she states.

Residents will be able to move about Waterford, says Dick. In addition, the small neighborhood will provide a feeling of comfort to residents, who, because of their illness, often can feel overwhelmed in a large, busy home. The small neighborhood is designed to create a family atmosphere. It includes its own dining area and space for common activities and socializing.

Waterford’s international award-winning Life Enrichment/Wellness program will be tailored to meet the needs of residents living in Pembroke.

Another important distinction is the ratio of staff to residents, which is higher than found in assisted living.

It was this ratio that especially appealed to Dawn Papenfuss.

“My mom has had some pretty rapid memory loss recently, and she needs more help now. Plus, she’s losing her nouns when she speaks. At the same time, she doesn’t need full memory care. This transition program is ideal. Now, my mom will have staff to help her select her clothes to wear, look through pictures with her and she won’t be bored.”

Papenfuss says her mom has adjusted “wonderfully” and is enjoying herself. She helped to decorate the community room, and she has done some baking.

“It’s awesome,” says Papenfuss. “I’m so relieved, and I’m thrilled with the companionship my mom receives,” adding that she “loves the staff.”

Staff in Pembroke have been trained in the Best Friends approach to care for people with Alzheimer’s or other age-related dementia. David Troxel developed this approach and is an internationally known author of four books (including *The Best Friends Approach to Alzheimer’s Care*). His model has influenced how care is provided to people living with age-related dementia at memory-care centers around the world.

The Best Friends approach is centered on what people with dementia need most – a “best friend.” Troxel’s mother had Alzheimer’s disease, and he advises, “Don’t fight their memory loss. Instead, journey with them.” He passionately believes that we can help those with the illness “live the best life.”

This is comforting news to loved ones, like Joyce and Dawn, who feel reassured that their family members are receiving care from people who understand the disease.

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According to the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's or age-related dementia illnesses currently affects one in four American families.

Waterford, which opened in 1998, offers a wide range of retirement homes and lifestyle options and is home to more than 150 people. The Waterford Health & Fitness Club is open to people over 40 and features a variety of fitness options. More information is available at WaterfordFargo.com.

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Sidebar:

What to look for: signs of age-related dementia or Alzheimer's disease

As families gather for December holidays, these special occasions can offer great insight to adult children, friends and other family members as to how the aging process—and especially dementia—affects a loved one's ability to live independently.

The following signs indicate that an older person may be experiencing some form of age-related dementia or Alzheimer's disease:

- Unpaid bills. Some utilities, subscriptions, and even the garbage service may have been cut off. People experiencing a dementia illness have lost the function that helps them remember to pay things on time. It's true that everyone can forget a bill from time to time, but individuals in early and mid-stage dementia forget consistently—and don't remember that they forgot.
- Declining health of not only the individual but also the spouse or primary caregiver.
- Weight loss or other evidence of malnourishment. People with age-related dementia forget to shop, cook, and eat.
- New dents and/or other problems with the family vehicle.
- A distinct absence of friends who used to call or come by regularly.
- Exaggerated stress over the demands of the holiday.
- A change in regular habits and routines. They may not go to church, the book club, or the neighborhood block party that they have always attended in the past. They can't remember or just can't navigate the social demands of the various settings.
- Unopened mail and or packages.
- A difference in sleep patterns as their circadian rhythm is greatly disrupted.
- Complete bewilderment at a meal out or a trip to the mall.
- Clutter and a lot of it. Conversely, they are throwing and/or giving away valuables and even family treasures.
- They may not recognize family members who are visiting. At this stage, it is more than time for a move to a protective environment.

It is important to remember that some or all of these may be present or not. People with dementia are great actors and can usually rise to the occasion for a brief visit. With assistance and support, family members can look deeper and longer for the telltale signs of Alzheimer's disease or age-related dementia.

SOURCE: Marge Coalman, EdD, vice president of wellness and programs, Touchmark.