KIRKWOOD ORANGE BRIDGES GAP IN MEMORY CARE

A Cadence Senior Living Community dedicated to caring for those with mild to moderate impairment.
By Christina Hernandez Sherwood

Every senior living resident has individual needs, and those living with dementia often need different kinds of help at different stages. Typically, senior living communities offer traditional assisted living services, as well as care for people with advanced-stage dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. Traditionally, there has been a care gap for those with mild-to-moderate memory impairment.

Until Kirkwood Orange, a Cadence senior living community in Orange, California, opened Chapman House in July 2015, there wasn’t an option in Southern California for people in-between. Today, Chapman House fulfills that need.

This population, with early signs of memory impairment and a dementia or Alzheimer’s diagnosis, is still typically high-functioning in terms of daily living. They are usually able to dress themselves, perhaps with some prompting, and perform basic grooming tasks. Chapman House’s new memory care focus allows these residents to age with dignity, limiting the need for them to move to a different community when their memory impairment progresses.
Meanwhile, residents at Gardner House, also part of the Kirkwood Orange community, live with advanced cognitive impairment. But they have something else in common: most spent their lives as homemakers.

It’s long-term memories—such as those of homemaking—that the new memory care activity program is designed to tap into. Activities are based on each individual’s personal interests and preferences, and tailored to accommodate cognitive and physical limitations. Recently, Gardner House residents have been working together to make a quilt. While the approach to the craft isn’t traditional—fabric pieces are glued onto upholstery fabric rather than stitched together—the project has sparked joy, says Cordula Dick-Muehlke, Ph.D., a licensed clinical psychologist and consultant in dementia and aging, who is working with Kirkwood Orange to develop these resident-centered activities.

“Whenever we get the quilt out, you should see the smiles,” Dick-Muehlke says. “Everybody is so happy. We’re tapping into something they can connect with.”

Because each resident has a different set of cognitive and physical abilities, interests and needs, this staged-care approach is designed to meet residents wherever they are. Instead of everyone playing the same evening game, for instance, some residents might listen to music on iPods. The next afternoon, while some work on paintings, others are pampered with manicures. As part of the “Spice of Life” activity, residents take turns smelling and identifying spices and discussing memories related to the scents. The always-popular pet therapy program is also available throughout the community.

“Most of the other communities in the area do strictly dementia care or strictly assisted living,” Vice President of Operations for Cadence Senior Living Tracy Colburn says. “We’re encompassing all three levels: assisted living, mild impairment and more severe impairment.”
This allows for a deeper dedication to memory care, yet Kirkwood Orange remains the small, inviting community it has been for 15 years.

Along with personalized assisted living and memory care services, all Kirkwood Orange residents enjoy the community's common spaces, including a library, beauty parlor, country kitchen, 24-hour ice cream parlor and outdoor patios.

“As an added safety measure, our security system allows staff to know when residents exit the building,” says Colburn. “This allows all of our residents—regardless of which neighborhood they reside in—to enjoy the entire community, including outdoor areas.”

But as much as the approach to care sets it apart, it’s the people who make Kirkwood Orange feel like home. “It’s small, it’s inviting,” Colburn says of the community. “Everybody knows everybody.”

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About Cadence Senior Living

Cadence is an owner, operator and developer of senior living communities headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona. Cadence principals have over 30 years of senior housing development and management experience. Cadence emphasizes the importance of quality care and creates comfortable, vibrant and exceptional communities celebrating the “rhythm of life.”