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Riverside Lodge opens Memory Support Wing

By Robert Pore

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Medication aide Mary Evans (center) walks through the great room with the kitchen and dining area behind her in the remodeled Memory Support Wing at the Riverside Lodge Retirement Community in Grand Island.

Barrett Stinson

Riverside Lodge Retirement Community has renovated a wing within its assisted living facility to increase the level of memory care and support services for seniors in Grand Island.

"We understand the challenges faced by individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's or other related dementias and wanted to offer specialized care to meet those specific needs," Executive Director Deb Friend said. "We are excited to announce the opening of the Arbor, the new memory support wing within Riverside Lodge."

Riverside Lodge is a locally owned and managed retirement community.

Friend said the Arbor memory support wing has a "home-like setting that offers personalized attention in a supportive and secure environment."

She said studies have shown that individuals requiring memory support often do better in small group environments.

Designed with a "neighborhood" concept, Friend said, the Arbor offers residents a "beautiful, open-concept living area that includes a sitting area, dining room/multipurpose space and a kitchen."

Residents also have access to a new, secure outdoor courtyard with a patio and walking path.

"Every part of the Arbor memory support wing was designed to ensure that residents enjoy a serene, tranquil environment," Friend said.

She said residents of the Arbor memory support "neighborhood" are able to participate in a multitude of activities matched to residents' interests and abilities.

"It has been amazing to watch residents blossom when they live in an environment in which they can succeed," said Cathy Roark, independent living manager, who helped develop the memory support activity program.

Specially trained memory support employees report to Administrator Melissa Miller and Resident Care Director Jolene Harvey. Miller joined Riverside Lodge as assisted living administrator in August 2016. Harvey has worked in multiple capacities at Riverside Lodge since 1989.

"For nearly 30 years, Riverside Lodge has set the standard for senior living in Grand Island and the surrounding area," board Chairman David Thayer said.

Thayer said that, in deciding to make the investment and effort necessary to improve the facility and add specially trained management and staff, “we made a commitment to provide the very best Alzheimer’s and dementia-related care available in the Grand Island area. And that’s consistent with Riverside Lodge’s approach to providing senior living options since its inception

Over the last few years, Friend said, when the facility discharged people, it was due to cognitive issues. But, because of the reputation for care Riverside Lodge has earned since it was opened in 1988 by the late Jan Thayer, families didn’t want their relatives leaving the facility.

“They wanted them to stay here and wanted to know what they could do,” Friend said. “That was when we decided that we do something about this.”

The decision to create a memory support unit was made about 16 months ago. Friend said the memory support unit was created in an existing building wing and now has 17 apartments.

With the addition of the new memory support unit, Riverside Lodge has added 12 employees.

The memory support unit opened about six weeks ago.

Riverside Lodge Retirement Community has 68 independent living units and 75 assisted living beds, as well as adjacent condominium homes within the Village at Riverside Lodge development.

Robert Pore

Reporter

I cover business, ag and general reporting for the GI Independent.