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Edgewood Retirement Community Announces State of the Art Alzheimer's & Cognitive Impairment Program Designed To Improve Quality of Life for Seniors

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NORTH ANDOVER, Mass. - (Business Wire) Dedicated to caring for seniors, Edgewood Retirement Community in North Andover (<http://www.edgewoodrc.com>) is pleased to announce its new Cognitive Impairment Program called The Garden Path. Combining an innovative set of care services provided by a top notch staff and a new state-of-the-art resident building, the Edgewood Garden Path Program is devoted to providing a high quality of life for seniors who have difficulty with mental functioning such as memory and sequential thinking. Most heavily associated with Alzheimer's Disease, cognitive impairment can also result from Dementias related to Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Depression, Stroke and other health issues that many seniors face.

The new program, beginning in January 2010 and accepting resident inquires now, is part of The Meadows at Edgewood, a skilled nursing center which already features short-term rehabilitation services (which Edgewood will be further enhancing in Spring 2010) as well as long term and end of life care. For residents not requiring this level of medical support, Edgewood also provides independent living in apartments, as well as new single family homes called The Villages –both options that come with access to a nurse practitioner at the onsite wellness center.

"With The Garden Path Program we really wanted to create something special that would bring the highest level of care to residents," said Marlene Rotering, Director of Edgewood Retirement Community. "By bringing together a strong and innovative care program, the deep knowledge and commitment of our nursing staff, and the science of healthcare design we feel we've really been able to achieve this."

Care & Caregivers Dedicated to Quality of Life

At the heart of The Garden Path Program, is a comprehensive set of care approaches and activities geared towards helping each of the 40 residents reach their unique and optimal level of physical, emotional and social well being.

All of these programs, as well as highest quality day-to-day care, are managed by Edgewood's highly experienced and specially trained staff who know how to successfully help cognitively impaired (CI) residents.

Highlights include:

- Group exercise programs and daily walking teams, as well as a healthy snack program to promote fitness, energy, and self-care.

- A calming sensory room where residents can reconnect with their senses e.g. hearing via music, instruments and rain sticks; touch with containers of shells, yarn, wood pieces and sand; smell through sachets of lemon, coffee, lavender or fresh cut grass, and sight with a fireplace, aquarium, art supplies, photographs, and cookbooks.
- Aromatherapy for individuals - or in groups- a particularly good approach if residents have lost their verbal abilities.
- Compassionate Touch Therapy which includes regular, loving interaction with therapy dogs and other animals.
- Opportunities for residents to make a snack or to cook or bake with a staff member in the community country kitchen designed with special safety features.
- A creative writing group which allows residents to explore and capture their thoughts, feelings and ideas.
- Expressive or Creative Arts Therapy which employs storytelling, dance, drama, movement, poetry and visual arts to help residents express their feelings and heal.

In addition to these beneficial programs, each resident will also have a Care Angel or buddy from the Garden Path staff that will be responsible for knowing them and their families more in-depth and acting as a consistent care advocate.

Families will also be part of The Garden Path experience through the availability of support groups, educational information and resources, access to social workers, social events and more.

Leading Edge Design = Vital Part of Care Picture

Also playing a critical role in daily quality of life for Garden Path residents is the new Garden Path building itself where every aspect of the 15,000 sq. ft. space -- from color and light ... to flow and function -- has been specifically designed to meet the needs of cognitively impaired residents.

The unique design-- meant to create a contemporary, highly-functional home vs. a sterile, institutional facility-- was created through close collaboration between respected healthcare architects Levi + Wong in Concord MA (<http://www.lwda.com/>), and the senior nursing staff at Edgewood. Margulies Perruzzi Architects of Boston MA were also a part of the project (<http://www.mp-architects.com.>)

Highlights include:

- A contemporary, circular floor plan where community areas surround and overlook a central courtyard space and resident rooms radiate off the common rooms. This eliminates long, hospital-like corridors that can confuse CI patients, provides ample natural light, and makes common spaces visible and inviting. The circular flow also helps the nursing staff keep an eye to activity and safety while allowing residents more freedom of movement.
- Bold and contrasting color schemes of reds, yellows and greens are used in spaces such as the dining room, activity & social areas, and bedroom "neighborhoods" to help residents connect specific colors with specific places and activities. These bold colors help foster higher recollection (vs. softer or pastel colors) and increase the ability of residents to return to popular locations more independently. Dining tables, plates and placemats also have distinct colors to stimulate appetite and contrasting colors are used on bathroom floors, walls and toilet seats to promote accurate toileting.

- Lighting, both natural and manmade, is abundant and customizable by the nursing staff which is important in helping residents get the right levels of light, at the right times which is shown to promote better nighttime sleep and less daytime agitation. Higher lighting levels also address the diminished eyesight and skewed brain interpretation of light, color and contrast that can come with CI conditions.
- With the safety and security of CI residents being paramount the new building is equipped with leading security and monitoring technologies as well as practical safety measures such as magnetic staff keys for certain cabinetry in the community kitchen, stove shut off switches, and the use of anti-slip flooring materials. The facility's central courtyard also provides a space that inspires a feeling of freedom, but provides safe exit and entry to and from common areas.
- A central, outdoor courtyard and an additional memory garden features wheel chair-height planting beds, a bird bath, wind-chimes and comfortable gliders to connect residents with nature and fresh air as well as their sense of smell which is tightly linked to memory. Additionally, through the tall, exterior-facing windows in every resident bedroom, all can enjoy their own private outside view and get natural light.

"With the Garden Path project we had the ability to design a cutting-edge space from the ground-up," said Ruth Neeman, lead designer and cognitive unit design expert from Levi + Wong. "This allowed us to incorporate the big and little things that will make the lives of people living here better. That is truly rewarding."

For more information on The Garden Path Program, other skilled nursing options at The Meadows or, Edgewood's independent living properties please visit (<http://www.edgewoodrc.com>).