



What to Look for in Dementia Care

PHILOSOPHY, SETTING, AND PROGRAM MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE.



Jane, once an avid gardener, works with a local garden club volunteer potting plants. Bill does word puzzles with a staff member. Grace is listening to music. In another corner, a group does armchair aerobics. Outside, Bob is strolling around the courtyard. In the afternoon, people will be dancing, singing, and reminiscing about the past.

Could all this possibly be going on in an Alzheimer's and dementia care unit? Yes, it can... and it does in the best facilities.

Unfortunately, many nursing home and assisted living facilities that offer care for people with dementia don't have specially trained staff, dedicated facilities, or special programming to provide such diverse, therapeutic care. Residents often sit alone hour after hour, without any stimulation, purposeful activities or social interaction. They don't have a secure place

to wander or a quiet retreat. They are safe and cared for, but life is at a standstill.

Many families believe that not much can be done once dementia begins to advance. Not knowing any better, they accept far less for their loved one than they should. Fortunately, there are good residential and day care facilities in Rhode Island that know how to make an extraordinary difference in the quality of life of a person with dementia.

Roberta Sinapi, Director of JSA's Comprehensive Adult Day Center and Renaissance Memory Support at Tamarisk says families need to educate themselves, look at options such as day care, and begin visiting facilities before a crisis occurs. Here are some of her suggestions on what to look for:

Observe the overall environment.

Is the setting bright and cheery?

Is the unit secure, with places for wandering inside and out?

Are there places for group activities as well as quiet spaces where a resident can be alone?

Are there memory triggers such as old photographs, signs, boxes of memorabilia?

How many residents are there per staff member?

Is there "life" within the unit?

Observe what's going on.

How are residents being treated?

Are they getting personal attention?

Does the staff appear upbeat and happy?

Do residents appear to be over-medicated?

Ask what programs are offered.

Are there ways to use life skills such as cooking, cleaning, woodworking, and gardening?

Is there sensory stimulation through aromatherapy, massage therapy, and music?

Is there a formal program plan for every day?

Is the program personalized according to interests and abilities?

Renaissance Memory Support at Tamarisk and the JSA's Comprehensive Adult Day Center (CADC) in Providence are among the best and most innovative programs in the state because of their holistic, activity-focused approach to care.

The Renaissance wing within Tamarisk offers 19 apartments for residents with various stages of Alzheimer's and dementia. Everything about the environment is designed to foster a continuation of familiar activities, and the social interaction that residents enjoyed prior to memo-

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NEWS BRIEFS

To Life Campaign Nears \$2 Million Mark

The *To Life* Capital Campaign officially kicked off on November 5 with the announcement of a \$1 million gift from Gary and Mynde Siperstein. As of December 31, \$1,983,146 has been raised. The goal is \$4 million – \$3 million to create an endowment to provide financial assistance to Tamarisk residents, and \$1 million to enhance the JSA endowment which funds on-going programs.

Rabinowitz Joins RIALA

JSA Executive Director Susette Rabinowitz has been appointed to the board of the Rhode Island Assisted Living Association (RIALA).

New Community Resource

Tamarisk is living up to its promise to be a wonderful new resource for the entire community. In just a few months, more than a dozen different groups and organizations have used the Community Room for events and meetings.

Good Deeds

Heartfelt thanks to the tenants at Shalom and Shalom II Apartments who donated “piles” of hats, gloves, mittens and children’s coats to the RI Department of Human Services annual “Coats for Kids Drive.”

Volunteers Needed to Conduct Shabbat Services at Tamarisk

Tamarisk is looking for volunteers to conduct Shabbat services after dinner on Friday nights. Service facilitators will lead prayers and tailor the service to their own comfort level using an abridged service booklet that has been used in nursing homes and assisted living facilities for several years. For more information on this most meaningful Mitzvah, contact Susan Adler at 621-5374 or jeriofri@aol.com.

700+ Past Donors Identified

For the past several months, JSA staff member Ethan Adler has been poring over old records trying to identify past donors of \$1,000 or more to the Jewish Home for the Aged. He searched through over thirty boxes and hundreds of files and financial records, cross-referenced names, and developed a list of over 700 individuals, businesses and foundations that supported the Home. Next, the list will be published in the Jewish Voice Herald and the community will be asked to help find errors and omissions in the list. The final list of names will be added to the Donor Recognition Wall at Tamarisk, representing the roots from which Tamarisk grew. Watch for our ad in February and help us make the reconstruction of our past support list as accurate as possible.

Put Your Interests and Talents to Work

MESSAGE FROM PATRICIA COHEN
JSA President

Very often, people ask me what the Jewish Seniors Agency does. When



I respond, they are amazed at the breadth and depth of our programs. Here’s a brief overview:

The Comprehensive Adult Day Center

provides a safe, supportive, activity-filled environment for individuals with physical impairments or dementia. InfoQuest is a free information and referral help line that eliminates the frustration of having to call many different agencies to get answers about senior services. One call to Information Specialist Susan Adler is all it takes. Through our JERI Program, we visit over four hundred Jewish seniors in assisted living residences and nursing homes each month, and we offer training to their

staffs in Jewish culture and customs. JERI volunteers and staff also bring gifts during the holidays and conduct Shabbat and Yizkor services and Passover Seders. Shalom and Shalom II in Warwick offer 153 affordable housing apartments. And our most recent initiative is the Phyllis Siperstein Tamarisk Assisted Living Residence, which includes a secure wing for residents with Alzheimer’s Disease or dementia.

As you can see, the JSA touches the lives and enhances the well-being, happiness and spirituality of hundreds of Jewish older adults and their families. My hope is that everyone in the community is pleased by the variety of programs we provide, that they utilize our services, and that they become part of this wonderful organization.

There are volunteer roles for everyone. Give us a call, and let’s discuss how to best put your interests and talents to work!

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ry loss. The stage is set for residents to thrive by recognizing individuality, focusing on abilities, and preserving dignity.

Both Renaissance and the CADC are staffed with people who have dementia training and experience, and who also demonstrate kindness, patience, and a good nature – all of which are considered vital attributes for the job. Staff members are expected to always think of innovative ways to bring out each person and to make them feel happy and secure.

“We want to give purpose and meaning to every person’s day,” Roberta said. “I want the staff to look for positive outcomes from every activity. If one thing isn’t proving beneficial, they need to try something new.” To do this, the staff has to know each person’s special needs and capabilities, as well as his or her background and past interests. “It takes passion, creativity and high energy to do this job well,” said Roberta.

“So much gets locked inside the person with dementia,” she said. “But



when put in the right environment, with the right cueing, we can rekindle memories, bring out the best in people, and maintain their dignity. Don’t think you have to settle for anything less for your loved one.”

To learn more, call Roberta Sinapi at 351-2440. She will be happy to discuss the JSA’s day and residential programs, and will send you a booklet with a comprehensive list of the things you should look for and ask when evaluating a dementia care facility or program.

Full Circle

The Phyllis Siperstein Tamarisk Assisted Living Residence Brings Back Residential Support for Jewish Elderly

Fifty years ago, the Jewish Home for the Aged bore little resemblance to nursing homes as we know them today. When seniors couldn't maintain their homes, they came to the Jewish Home. They paid whatever they could afford. One of the few requirements for residency was that you were able to walk in! One could say it was an early version of what is now called "assisted living," but that assistance required a lot of help from volunteers. Women's Association members cooked meals, provided care, and ran errands for the resi-



An elegant dining room brings residents together to share delicious meals and lively conversations.



Tamarisk's outdoor spaces are designed for activities, pleasant strolls and resort-like relaxation.



Dottie Lippman's favorite common area at Tamarisk is the library.

dents. They were also the Home's financial backbone. According to Dottie Lippman, a past president, their group raised money for the Home through bazaars, a gift shop and annual events such as the Linen & Equipment Fund Raiser. (So named because admission to the first event was a pillowcase!)

Times changed. Residents were more frail and nurses replaced the volunteers as caregivers. In the 1970's, the Home opened a new nursing care facility on Hillside Avenue in Providence. The Women's Association continued to raise money to support operations, while donations and bequests from hundreds of individuals and organizations were contributed to an endowment fund.

But even with so much community support, the Home couldn't survive difficult financial times. It closed in 1993. The Board and staff made sure that residents were relocated to the

best possible nursing homes throughout the state. The long and proud history of residential care for Jewish seniors ended, but not the will to find new ways to make a difference in senior's lives. Jewish Eldercare of RI (JERI) was started to keep Jewish nursing home residents connected to their traditions through visits and programs. The Jewish Home for the Aged was renamed the Jewish Seniors Agency and other programs and services began. (See the JSA President's Message.)

But something was missing – there was no longer a home where Jews who needed assistance could live among people who shared common beliefs and traditions. That void was filled on September 18, 2003 when The Phyllis Siperstein Tamarisk Assisted Living Residence opened. Very fittingly, Dottie Lippman, who devoted so much time and energy as a Jewish Home volunteer, is one of

Tamarisk's first residents.

"We've come full circle," she said. "The endowment the community built at the Jewish Home is still being used as intended – to support the needs of our elderly, with a portion of it invested in assisted living."

For Dottie, Tamarisk is a home in the fullest sense of the word. She loves her new life and the new extended family she has there. Her advice to people who may be considering assisted living: "Make the move sooner rather than later." Dottie still has a car, but she was falling into the trap of not going out in the winter, after dark, or when she had to drive too far. Her world was shrinking, but at Tamarisk the world comes to her!

"Here I'm surrounded by people who share my Jewish roots and there are things to do every day. Tamarisk is an opportunity you can let go by, or you can take advantage of all there is to offer here. I'm glad I had a hand in the fund raising and planning that made Tamarisk possible, and that I'm now able to partake of the fruits!"

Meister Menorahs

Decorated with love to light up lives

JERI volunteer Herb Meister has done it again. First he came up with the idea of a statewide Latke Day, when potato latkes are served in nursing homes throughout the state. This Hanukkah, nursing home residents were the beneficiaries of his latest great idea. Herb made over 200 wooden menorahs – single-handedly sawing, sanding, and gluing each piece, and drilling a total of 1,800 holes to hold the “candles.” Then JERI Director Susan Adler put out a call for help to turn the plain menorahs into works of art. The response was overwhelming. One day after letters went out, all the menorahs were spoken for by children in Hebrew and day schools, the staff of Jewish agencies, members of the Federation Women’s Alliance, and individuals who had heard about the



project. “If we had a hundred more menorahs, we would have had people to decorate them,” said Susan.

In a short time, the menorahs were back – decorated with paint designs, stickers, ribbons, feathers – whatever the artist dreamed would turn a plain wooden piece into a lovely Hanukkah gift. Each unique piece will be “lit” with colorful crayons to simulate candles, which aren’t allowed in nursing homes.

The JSA Women’s Association gift-wrapped each menorah, and volunteers delivered them beginning

on December 15. Meister’s creative idea has truly been a community effort that put smiles on the faces and joy in the hearts of the 204 Jewish residents in nursing homes throughout the state.



“I get a wonderful feeling working with the elderly,” said Meister. The ‘Meister Menorah Project’ is my way of helping Jews confined in a secular environment to stay connected to our traditions and holidays. I’m already thinking about what to do next!”

Shalom and Shalom II

Much more than affordable housing

When Shalom opened in 1980, bringing affordable housing to Warwick, Director Bonnie Sekeres was determined that the residence would have a social worker on-site. But HUD, the federal agency funding the apartments, wouldn’t pay for it. Undeterred, Bonnie proposed using interest from a reserve account to fund the position. The innovative idea went all the way to the Washington office of HUD and was approved. A few years later, HUD began *requiring* that housing programs like Shalom have a resident services coordinator – and they provided the funding. We can only guess that Bonnie opened the government’s eyes to the importance of having a trained professional to help residents access community agencies and service providers.

Shalom’s resident services coordinator is Marge Moskol. She keeps a watchful eye on residents and offers help, advice, comfort and support to any tenant in need. She also keeps up-to-date information on each resident’s medications, allergies, physicians, family contacts, and other vital information that would be needed in

an emergency. The information is kept in a Vial of Life stored in each resident’s refrigerator. Thanks to Marge’s valuable program, staff, family and emergency personnel know just where to look when critical information is needed.

With an active Tenants’ Association, regular social activities and outings, an on-site resident services coordinator, and a meal site, which offers nutritious meals at a nominal fee, apartments at Shalom and Shalom II are in great demand. “You may wait a year to get in, but we make it worth the wait,” said Bonnie.

Bonnie feels the biggest misconception in the community is that you have to be very poor to live at Shalom. Although there is a HUD requirement that 40% of the residents must have very low income, couples can earn as much as \$43,000. Applicants must be 62 years old or mobility disabled. “There’s a nice mix of people living here, which gives vitality and a real sense of community to the place. People thrive here,” said Bonnie.

Generations



Is a publication of
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