

Oak Meadows: A place to call 'home'

Oak Meadows is more than an independent and assisted living facility. For its tenants, it is also their home.

Part of what makes Oak Meadows a home is the professional care and support of the dedicated nurses and Home Health Aides who work hard to keep the tenants safe, comfortable and happy. Extensive training, years of experience and a genuine interest in the tenants set the home care staff at Oak Meadows apart from other facilities.

Oak Meadows opened in 1998 and has been voted Best Assisted Living by Lillie Suburban Newspaper readers four consecutive years in a row, and Best Senior Retirement the past two years.

Life at Oak Meadows is second to none thanks, in part, to the vast array of activities available for the tenants. The Activities Director frequently schedules morning, afternoon and evening activities that range from an afternoon tea to a relaxing evening in the fireside lounge. Home Health Aide, Teresa Kuronen, recently began a group called Bundles of Love.

"The seniors absolutely love it," Executive Director Connie Dow says.

Bundles of Love began meeting monthly to crochet and knit mittens, blankets and booties for premature infants, but due to the popularity of the club, it now gathers to knit and crochet every week.

Each of the HHA's at Oak Meadows has undergone extensive training and has been certified by the state of Minnesota. The Home Health Aides must pass a competence test, health assessment and background checks, then complete a 10-day floor orientation and 12 hours of in service per year.

"I've had a lot of applicants, but we don't have a high turnover. That says a lot for us," says Sherry Holmgren, Home Care Services Coordinator at Oak Meadows. "We're blessed with the staff we have. We have a great bunch of people."



Pictured from left to right are: Sue Goodier, RN; Mary Pasek, RN, Clinical Administrator; Sheila Skara, Home Health Aide; and Sherry Holmgren, Home Care Services Coordinator.

Holmgren says she loves her work. "It's a really great environment. We really care about the tenants."

Holmgren, who has worked at Oak Meadows for four years and with Presbyterian Homes for over 20, says the interaction with her co-workers and the tenants are her favorite aspects of her job.

"One of the things I noticed right away was how family-oriented the staff at Oak Meadows is. I really like working here — it's been a positive experience," says Holmgren, who commutes 100 miles round trip every day to work at Oak Meadows.

Daily activities for Home Health Aides include helping tenants with bathing, dressing, hair styling and getting them to and from meals and activities.

"We enjoy providing care," Holmgren says. "We do every aspect of the home care — a little bit of everything!"

Sheila Skara, who has been an HHA at Oak Meadows since 1999, loves the interaction with the tenants.

"You get to know people and their life stories," Skara says. "The tenants like talking about their lives, and we enjoy listening to them."

"HHA's provide assistance for people who can't do things for them-

selves, but they also provide a lot of companionship," says Mary Pasek, RN, Clinical Administrator.

Skara's typical day starts out very busy as she moves from apartment to apartment, visiting with each tenant as she helps with breakfast, dressing, showering or whatever else is needed.

Even though they are busy, the tenants recognize the genuine care and concern provided by the HHA's. "I've gotten a lot of compliments on our staff from the tenants," Holmgren says.

A yearly survey taken by the tenants and their families reported 98 percent satisfaction from tenants and 97 percent from families.

"One tenant asked me the other day, 'Do you know how lucky you are to have these girls?'" Holmgren says with a laugh. She says the HHA's are "outstanding, dedicated, and team-oriented. They think on their feet, and they go above the call of duty. There's a lot of good teamwork between Presbyterian Homes and Oak Meadows staff."

Tenants' health is taken very seriously at Oak Meadows, and a nurse is on staff Monday through Friday. Nurses are on call during nights and weekends. HHA's are in the building 24/7.

"Presbyterian Homes is a class-A, Medicare-certified home care



Pictured above are Elizabeth Kangere (HHA) and Arline Rude (tenant).

agency," Pasek says. "We offer skilled services like occupational, physical and speech therapists, and then bill Medicare and insurance directly."

A wide array of services are available in assisted living. Limited services are available in independent living.

Oak Meadows is unique not only because of its great staff and the care provided, but also in how the facility is operated. While the building is owned by Oak Meadows, health care is provided by Presbyterian Homes Services, which maintains over 30 senior buildings. Presbyterian Homes, which celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2005, entered into a partnership with Oak Meadows in September of 1998.

"It was a good fit," Dow says. "We are both faith-based, not-for-profit and mission-focused organizations." The result is an affiliation that is "the best of both worlds," Pasek says.

For more information, call Kim Prayfrock at 651-578-0676 or e-mail at info@oak-meadows.org. Oak Meadows is located at 8131 Fourth St. N., Oakdale.



Pictured in the back row, from left to right, are: Sandy Anderson (HHA), Amanda Diamond (tenant) and Lisa Gregory (HHA). In the front row are tenants Vera Peacock and Evelyn Brockman.