

The magicians behind the scenes at Oak Meadows



Edward brought in discarded flowers from a local store, and residents enjoy arranging them in vases.

If you're living at home and an appliance breaks or the roof springs a leak, whom do you call? Chances are you have to phone around and find someone to come fix it.

If something happens at your elderly parents' house, what do you do then?

For the residents at Oak Meadows senior living community, there is no calling around. They simply notify the front desk and put in a work order. The maintenance workers, housekeepers and painter are there to help fix whatever problems may arise.

228. That's the average number of work orders the Oak Meadows maintenance crew, housekeepers and painters get in a six-week period. The count doesn't even include the smaller fixes that happen for seniors on a weekly basis.

"It magically gets done," says Deborah Veit, Oak Meadows executive director.

This group of employees may not always be visible to visitors, but the work they do enhances residents' lives in countless ways.

Oak Meadows is an impressive facility, featuring The Ponds independent living apartments; The Pines assisted living, and The Woods memory care. Altogether there are 122 housing units, plus common areas, and all need routine upkeep.

Oak Meadows has two maintenance staff, three housekeepers and a painter. Besides work orders to replace faucets, repair door handles and a multitude of other jobs, the staff replace light bulbs, maintain air conditioning and fix kitchen equipment.

"People in the outside world don't understand what goes into a successful senior complex," says Kim Prayfrock, director of community relations. "On top of all they do, these guys know the residents. They know their names. They know some of their family members, and they know the little kids that come in to see Grandpa and Grandma."

Veit says it's important for staff going into the apartments to have a friendly relationship with the seniors.

Maintenance director Tim Lawrence recently had his first granddaughter, Katie, and he says the tenants love seeing photos of her and frequently ask how she is doing.

Associate maintenance director Jim Temple was in a tenant's apartment recently and noticed he knew their last name. Then the tenant's son came in and Jim recognized him from when he worked at the son's daughter's school, 20 years ago. They had a great time reminiscing, and Jim chuckles as he says, "It really is a small world."

Oak Meadows has a caring, family atmosphere, and the maintenance staff, housekeepers and painter do what they can to make the residents feel at home.

Painter Kerry Soban has been on staff for 13 years. In 2008, when Wii Bowling was becoming popular in senior communities, Oak Meadows bought a system. Kerry helped the activity director plan a Wii Bowling tournament. They even had shirts made that said "Kerry's Painting." The winners received medals, and Kerry gave each a floral bouquet.

Edward, one of the housekeepers,



Maintenance staff Jim Temple, left, and Tim Lawrence can fix whatever problems may arise.



Kerry Soban, the staff painter at Oak Meadows, helped organize the popular Wii Bowling tournament for the residents.

says he loves coming to work. For many months a local store has given him its discarded flowers, and tenants put the flowers in vases. One day, a tenants was ill, and Edward grabbed a rose from one of the vases and brought it to her, and she smiled for the first time in days.

Another housekeeper, Anna, frequently gets hugs from residents as they see her walk down the hall.

At Oak Meadows, someone from maintenance and housekeeping is always on call 24/7.

Veit says these are services people don't really think about as being as vital as they are to the overall quality of the residents' lives.

"It's important to have everything in working order," she says.



Housekeepers Edward and Anna help keep the senior living complex clean and welcoming. (not shown, Hector)

**Progress
2017**

**Call Kim at 651-578-0676
to learn about openings
in assisted living**

8131 Fourth Street North
Oakdale, MN 55128
www.oak-meadows.org

