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FEATURED

Willowick opens sixth location with memory care

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer

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Willowick Senior Living COO Frieda Pulkowski stands outside Willowick's newest community built at 3024 S. E Moments Memory Care as well as assisted living in one location. It accepted its first resident on Thursday.

Hillary Gavan



For example, there is a workshop with a vintage lunch pail and tools to help trigger conversations about the past. A faux store and kitchen setup may spark conversations about cooking and the sports area may bring back memories on the field or rooting in the stands. Families and visitors are encouraged to visit with loved ones in the various nooks that contain cue cards to help spark conversation and lots of tactile items to engage residents.

Part of Willowick's mission is to not only care for those in memory care, but also to educate their families on how to relate to their loved ones as they are dealing with memory loss. Staff also help families work out their feelings stemming from putting a loved one in memory care.

Meanwhile, staff members do lots of detective work to determine the interests of residents through researching their histories to help make added connections.

An important part of working with those with dementia is meeting them wherever their memories reside, which could be now or in the 1940s or at other times in their past.

“We are meeting them where they are,” Pulkowski said.

Hillary Gavan



BELOIT — Willowick Senior Living is bringing some of the latest approaches in memory care with the opening of its sixth assisted living community, Willowick Beloit Campus at 3024 S. Bartells Drive.

The new community is offering traditional assisted living as well as memory care, accepting its first resident last Thursday, according to Chief Operating Officer Frieda Pulkowski.

The first Willowick facility was built in Clinton and opened in 2016. The concept, Pulkowski explained, was to offer high quality care in a home-like environment.

Today, there are a total of six Willowick facilities. There are two in Clinton— Willowick in Clinton at 306 Ogden Ave., and Willowick Moments at 304 Ogden Ave. In Beloit there is Willowick Beloit II, 2240 Cranston Ave., and Willowick in Beloit at 1971 Cranston Ave. Willowick in Janesville is at 2860 Liberty Lane.

When the latest Willowick is fully staffed, there will be 130 employees under the Willowick umbrella.

The newest Willowick is the first to offer both assisted living and memory care in one place. The new setup includes two buildings connected in the middle. One side is the residential care apartment complex and the other side is a community-based

residential facility offering memory care. One of the possibilities offered by the new setup would be a couple able to remain close to each other while one is in the senior apartment and the other is in memory care for dementia.

“We’ve known couples where one had dementia and one did not, and they didn’t want to be separated,” Pulkowski said.

The assisted living area includes studio, one and two-bedroom apartments while the memory side has medium and large-size studios.

Those in the apartments can receive up to 28 hours of care, enabling them to get increasing levels of care if necessary as they age in place.

The memory care side, Moments Memory Care, offers a model with one caregiver per six to eight people during the daytime hours and innovative approaches. It uses the Best Friends program to create a structure for how staff approach residents for best outcomes. It’s a philosophy treating residents as adults and approaching them as friends.

Staff members learn to meet residents “where they are.” Because those with dementia retain long-term memories more than short-term memories, staff learn to ask them questions about their daily lives in the past. The memory care area is also sprinkled with nooks to trigger fond and calming memories.

