

Podcast Transcript:

Brooke: Welcome to our first, our very first @ Home podcast episode exploring the very important person-centered care issue, welcoming elders moving into your home. I'm your host, Brooke Thornbrugh. Imagine with me, you're retired spending your days in your home of your own your friends, look just down the street, everything is just the way that you like it. The next thing you know, everything becomes difficult without assistance from others, your health, maybe declining or accidents happen. And you need to move into a long-term care community. What emotions would you have during this time of transition, transition for all you have known for so many years? Well, today, we have Sandi Hageman, recently retired administrator, 45 years here to help us talk through what we can do to start the process of making the community feel more at home for elders. Sandi, can you tell us a little bit more about your work in the aging community and your passion behind your work?

Sandi: So, I just recently retired from Leonardville Nursing Home after being there for 45 years. I graduated from K-State as a licensed social worker and became the administrator for 34 of those 45 years. We started person-centered care seven years ago in the facility and started with a lot of training for the staff before we actually did person-centered care.

Brooke: Yeah, it takes a lot of work to get that implemented in homes. And so, seven years seems like a little bit ago, but I'm sure it doesn't feel like that long ago for you. That's it. It's been a good experience. Yeah. So, getting started, what are some things? What are some person-centered care strategies for getting to know elders? And when do you start these things?

Sandi: Well, it is important to do a screening before the elder is ever admitted. The staff will go to the hospital, their home or wherever they are prior to move in to ask them questions, so we can get to know a little bit about them before they move in. We like to know how they prefer to be addressed, for example, by their first name, nickname or their full name. The elder and our families are asked about their morning, afternoon and evening routines, their eating routines and preferences, their favorite foods, foods they enjoy dislike, or don't eat due to their beliefs and some of their snacks and some of their food allergies. It's also important to know names of important people in their lives, especially if they have dementia so the staff can respond appropriately. We like to know their prior living arrangements and their feelings about move in. We like to know what their future plans or goals are, and whether they plan to return home, move elsewhere or stay long term. The information that we gather will get more detailed and will continue to build and change as time goes forward. As the memories come up, we're also constantly adding info as their history unfolds. And we know that it'll change and it'll become more personalized with time. It's important to communicate with the staff in the neighborhood as

much information that we have before the elder moves in. Because this will help the elder feel more welcome.

Brooke: Yeah, some of those things may get lost and people may forget, but they're really important. Even just knowing the names of people in their lives or snacks that they eat. What are some of the best practices that you have used to make elders feel more welcome?

Sandi: Well, the staff member that makes that first connection with the screening process tries to be there upon move in. So, the first person they see is familiar. And we gather a welcome basket of the things that they've told us that they enjoy during the screening, such as their favorite snacks, hobbies, crossword puzzles, a book or a magazine, they might enjoy a game or maybe favorite bath products. We try to have some of their familiar belongings in their room so they can help arrange their things as they want. And we try to fix their favorite meal or their comfort food on their first day, we introduce the new elder to the other elders and staff in the neighborhood. And consistent staffing in their neighborhood helps them feel safe and comfortable, as they will know who will be there to take care of them day to day. We also encourage their family and friends to come visit anytime or share meals or coffee with them just as they would in their own home. But of course, this past year has been a lot different with that because of COVID. I hope that now that COVID is less of a threat and more people are vaccinated that we can get back to having a lot of visitors because we're kind of an active community with lots of people around...

Brooke: Yeah!

Sandi: ...and we encourage the new elder to be a part of the daily life and happenings in their neighborhood. When we foster the routines that they're accustomed to throughout their day, for example, when they first get out, they may have a ritual that they like for the order that they wash their face and brush their teeth, have morning devotions have coffee or breakfast. And we want that to continue as much as possible on their own schedule.

Brooke: Yeah, it sounds like it's really all in the detail and getting to know a person individually and not just tailoring it to a one size fits all type of mentality. I know you've talked a little bit about this, but how do you help foster relationship building with the new elders?

Sandi: Just by getting to know them and doing things with groups and the consistent staffing and the consistent elders in the neighborhood. It's a smaller group. And so, it's much easier to foster relationships with a few people rather than a lot of different people every day.

Brooke: Yeah. Why do these strategies make a difference in the home?

Sandi: Once again, the smaller setting of the neighborhood and the consistent staffing is so important, a feeling of trust will start to form and it's not so overwhelming, when there are fewer people to meet and get to know just like we talked about, we encourage the elders and staff to spend time with each other and engage in conversations getting to know each other, like play games, complete art projects, baking, gardening, whatever they enjoy. And we just fostering relationships is what it's all about. There'll become a close-knit family while getting to know each other's likes, dislikes, families and friends. And through the consistent staffing, the staff is able to invest their time and love in the elders, they form the bonds with each other that are so precious to watch. And the elders and the staff become such a close-knit family.

Brooke: You've talked a little bit and you have said the word neighborhoods, could you tell us a little bit about what neighborhood is?

Sandi: For us, a neighborhood was, we are a licensed 59 bed home. And we have three neighborhoods, and one of those neighborhoods is a Memory Care Unit, where it is secure for the people that have a tendency to wander. And the other two are for people with health issues or whatever. There are smaller areas, like perhaps one of the hallways, we've adapted to have as, like their own little, small nursing home within the big nursing home. So, they have their own dining area, their own bathing area, they have their own area to get together for their activities and for meeting together. And so those 20 people become really good friends and work together and know all of their visitors and their likes.

Brooke: So, like a neighborhood community, but inside a long-term care facility, in making it a little bit smaller of a feel. Yeah. Can you think of an example of a time when these person-centered care strategies made a significant impact on an elder?

Sandi: Yes, actually, we had a lady who had dementia, who hadn't responded verbally for a few years. And when we first went into the neighborhoods, and we had the consistent staffing, so the same voices, the same personalities, and they were able to spend more time with her. And they built the personal relationship, and she actually started to verbalize with them. And so, through time, she was able to form complete sentences and have conversations with her daughters. And it was such a joy.

Brooke: Yeah. Well, that's all the questions I have for you today. But thank you so much for coming out and taking the time in your retirement to talk to us a little bit about all the work that you've done, and we really appreciate you. Thank you.

Brooke: That concludes the very first episode of the @ Home podcast on Welcoming Elders. Sandi shared some fantastic insights today on getting to know elders as they move in and making elders feel acknowledged and welcomed through this major life transition. We invite you to listen in on more podcasts that will be released monthly. Connect with us by email if you any questions or topics that you would like to hear us discuss.