

Assisted Living More Than A Community... It's Home!



Dr. Larry Lake is a licensed psychotherapist and the CEO of BayView Healthcare, as well as its parent organization, the St. Johns Welfare Federation. Lake says "as a local non-profit healthcare provider, we are excited about how this FORUM can help share

the knowledge and expertise of the more than 280 healthcare professionals at BayView and across our continuum of care. In each issue we will address an area of interest to help consumers be even more informed about their health and Wellness."

This FORUM focuses on Assisted Living Communities and providing guidance on how to choose the best community for you. Assisted living is a senior residential housing choice that is the fastest growing long-term care option for older Americans today. It combines housing, customized support services and health care as needed. There are over 36,000 assisted living facilities in the

United States with more than one million Americans living in them. Assisted living is an excellent option for seniors seeking an independent and vibrant lifestyle, who require some level of assistance with everyday activities.

Katherine Trussell is the administrator of BayView Assisted Living at The Pavilion and has been a licensed administrator since 1997. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a Master of Arts in Gerontology. Katherine answers many important questions in this FORUM helping us to better understand what is an Assisted Living Community, is Assisted Living right for you and how to determine the best community for you.

to investigate include atmosphere, physical features, costs and finances, medication and health care services, individual suite features, food service, social and recreational activities. Making the right choice should focus on these important issues: quality of life, standards of care, cost and value.

Florida assisted living facilities are licensed and regulated by the Agency for Health Care Administration and must comply with state and local building codes, fire safety regulations and Department of Health regulations.

TYPICAL ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY AMENITIES:

- *Three meals a day served in a common dining area
- *Housekeeping services
- *Transportation
- *Assistance with eating, bathing, dressing, toileting and walking
- *Access to health and medical services
- *Staff available to respond to both scheduled and unscheduled needs
- *24 hour security
- *Emergency call system in each residential apartment
- *Exercise and wellness programs
- *Medication management
- *Personal laundry services
- *Social and recreational activities

Life Changes

There can be many reasons that prompt you to consider leaving your home and moving to an assisted living facility (ALF). Factors can include your health, a chronic decline in function or permanent physical disability, loss of a spouse, social isolation or you simply no longer want to look after the day-to-day activities of maintaining your own home.

Your **physical health** may leave you experiencing difficulties managing your home or placing you at a higher risk for falls or injury. Maintaining your home can be quite a task, especially if you have physical limitations that make chores or activities difficult or even impossible. In an assisted living environment you no longer have to bear the

responsibility of maintaining your yard, the exterior and interior of your home or the day-to-day repairs.

The physical design of your **home** may no longer be as practical as it was years ago and it may now hold **hazards** for you as you age. Stairs in your home increase the chances of a fall and potential for serious injury. The design and layout of your home may not safely accommodate a walker or wheelchair. Assisted living communities are specifically designed to offer you the maximum amount of safety. Doorways are wider to fit walkers and wheelchairs, bathrooms will have grab bars, walk-in showers, shower benches and elevated toilet seats.

An assisted living community offers socialization which is often very appealing for those who have **lost their spouse**, are **socially**

isolated, who have **stopped driving** and are experiencing difficulty getting to social opportunities. Most assisted living communities offer several community rooms that can be used for gathering with friends and family, watching television, reading and participating in organized social events. Most assisted living communities have transportation that provides you with an opportunity to join others on a shopping trip and social outings.

How to Choose an Assisted Living Community

Before making a decision on a specific assisted living community, you should always explore several. It is important to know what individual services they offer and for you to tour the facility to find the one that best suits your lifestyle, personality and needs. Areas

Health & Medicine

Atmosphere

Upon arrival to the assisted living facility take notice of its location and outward appearance. As you enter the lobby and tour the residence, is the décor attractive and homelike to you? Take notice if the administrator and staff call residents by their name and interact with them in a warm and caring manner. Do the residents seem to be appropriate housemates for you?

Physical Features

It is important that the community be well-designed to meet your needs. Is the floor plan easy to follow? Are there handrails in the hallways? Is the community clean and free of odors? Are floors covered in a non-skid material? Does each suite have its own lockable door? Is there an emergency response system in each suite? As you tour the facility take note if different sizes and types of suites are available and what the costs are involved. Inquire if single and double occupancy suites are offered. It is important to ask what personal items you may bring with you from home and what apartment items are already provided. Take note of the lighting. Does it have good natural and artificial lighting? Our eyes change over time and lighting is important for personal safety as well as enabling us to see and participate in our environment.

Costs and Finances

According to the Assisted Living Federation of America, a majority (86.2%) of assisted living residents pay from their personal financial resources. There are some community based "waiver"

programs available to help cover assisted living costs for lower income residents. If you have long-term care insurance, it is important to investigate whether this plan can be applied to the cost of an assisted living facility and if the community you are interested in accepts long-term care insurance.

It is important to ask what additional services are available should an individual's need change and what the costs are. Are residents required to purchase renters insurance for their personal property in their suite? Do all suites have telephone, cable TV and internet access? If so, how is the billing handled on these matters?

Health

Does the community have specific policies regarding medication storage and staff assistance with medications? Is self-administration of medications permitted? Are there policies and procedures for responding to a resident medical emergency? Is Hospice allowed to come in and care for residents? Are there staff members available to help set up and coordinate health care services such as home health, out-patient therapy, doctor appointments and transportation to these appointments? Does the community have a process for assessing a resident's need for services and are those needs addressed periodically? What types of personal care services are available if a residents needs change?

Social and Recreation

Are residents encouraged to participate in activities? Where are organized activities posted? What types of activities are planned? Do residents participate in activities outside the assisted living



Photo by Christine Cousart www.cousartphotography.com

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community? Are there volunteers and family members who help conduct activities? Can pets come

to visit? Is there a Resident Council that you can take part in?

Dining

Is there a common dining area? Can family join residents for meals? Can specific dietary needs be accommodated and special foods be requested? Ask to see monthly menus. Are the meals nutritionally balanced? Are snacks available at all times?

Moving is hard and change can be challenging, both for the individual as well as for family and close friends. Recognize that the decision to move into an assisted living facility and the actual move is both physically and emotionally draining for a person. Listen as your loved one talks about what they left behind. Be supportive, patient and positive. Visit often and give lots of hugs. *WJ*



Health & Wellness Forum

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BayView Healthcare is part of the St. Johns Welfare Federation, a private not-for-profit comprehensive continuum of healthcare provider founded in 1920. BayView Healthcare offers two assisted living communities; Buckingham Smith and The Pavilion. Buckingham Smith is a 36-bed assisted living facility with a limited nursing license. It is unique in its ability to provide quality assisted living for those elderly or disabled residents who may not otherwise be able to afford the financial obligations of assisted living. The Pavilion Assisted Living is a 59-bed standard licensed assisted living community offering nine different floor plans. It is located on the scenic Intracoastal Waterway and is surrounded by nature walks and gazebos. Other amenities offered include a boardwalk, dock and pool. For further information on the assisted living communities available at BayView Healthcare please call (904) 829-3475.