

Residents Discover Libby's House Difference

By Mark Sherry, Tri County News

There are a lot of assisted living facilities in this area and beyond, all of them doing their best to provide the best possible care for their residents.

Staff members at Libby's House of Chilton do the same but also believe they have carved out some niches and do some things differently to the benefit of their residents. They call it "The Libby's House Difference."

Located at 323 Field Ln., Libby's House opened in 2011 and is locally owned and operated by Tina Thill. She said she is rededicating efforts to let the community know the special lengths to which Libby's House goes to provide a safe and comfortable home for their residents.

One area in which Libby's House sets itself apart from some other assisted living facilities is the fact that it specializes in dementia care. Thill said the staff focuses on memory care, adding, "We're celebrating the moments, knowing people can't always remember."

Therapeutic program

An example of that care is the therapeutic program at Libby's House which provides activities based on what residents have always enjoyed doing, whether that be playing golf, cards, going on picnics, etc. That might not mean heading out to a golf course, for example, but it could mean doing simple things to celebrate the memories of a former golfer. "We modify for success," Thill said. She said staff members work to remove any anxiety and pressure residents might feel about activities, knowing that things such as emotions, spirituality, and a love for music usually still exist within their residents. "We try to make more joyful moments," Thill said.

Dining services which are fitted to people with one or more of the 70-plus types of dementia are another aspect of Libby's House. As a registered nurse, Thill said she is again overseeing the dietary area with input from her son Jeremiah Reynolds, who is a chef. Together with their staff they provide meals for therapeutic diets, giving residents meals which not only taste good but are good for their particular health situations.

Libby's House distinguishes itself in other ways as well. It has a dedicated therapeutic programming director in Sandy Freund. Daily activities include exercise and creative activities, all done in a simple environment which is easy to navigate.

Libby's House also works with hospice programs to provide dignity to the end of life. It welcomes working with residents and families to bring in health care providers of the family's choosing.

Each room at Libby's House has its own bathroom and shower. A number of couples suites are available which provide the ability of couples to stay together. Thill recounted the story of a couple in which one of the people had dementia and the other did not, and they were living in separate facilities. Libby's House officials said they would take both of them. When the spouses were reunited, one of them said, "I thought you died." Thill said, "They can celebrate each other again."

Thill said another benefit of Libby's House is its administrator, area native Stephany Grenzer. Grenzer has been the administrator for four years—a long tenure in the industry—and also is a licensed practical nurse.

Grenzer said having a nurse on site 24/7 and having a smaller facility are a couple more ways in which Libby's House provides the best possible atmosphere for its residents.

"I like the dedication of the staff, the compassion that is shown from the owner all the way to the caregivers," Grenzer said. "It feels like home."

Thill said her administrator "has a wonderful heart" and is a key part of how Libby's House meets its mission statement: "Libby's House, a home for seniors, is dedicated to providing peace of mind to residents and families by offering dignified care while respecting the mind, body and spirit of each person served."

Doggie Days on July 29

Thill said they want to share that more with the community via events such as the Doggie Days of Summer coming up Monday, July 29. The public is welcome to come in from 4 to 7 p.m. and get a hot dog and soda for a small contribution which will go to the Eastshore Humane Association, which is kind enough to bring in dogs for the residents to see and pet. In addition, Thill said she will be providing monthly talks at Libby's House on a variety of topics.

Libby's House obviously provides all the basic services, Thill said, including basic first aid, customized care plans, medication management, an emergency response system in apartments, satellite TV and utilities included, laundry and housekeeping services, a transportation bus for shopping and activities, and a secure facility which includes a gated courtyard. Tours can be set up by calling Grenzer at 849-4657.

Libby's House also holds a special place in Thill's heart as well as it is named after her grandmother who lived to be 106. Thill said Libby's House was founded on what she learned from her grandmother.

"This is really small town stuff," Thill said. "It's really neat to walk in and know us."

