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Willowdale Director Feels Right at Home

By Mark Sherry

Madelyn Process said she feels right at home as the executive director of Willowdale Health Services in New Holstein. Process knows all about small communities, having grown up in Sobieski and graduating from Pulaski High School. She also knows about long-term care facilities, having spent a lot of time in them visiting grandparents and great grandparents while growing up.

After receiving her Bachelor's Degree in Health Care Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Process landed her first full-time job in that field last June at Willowdale. Her training on the way to earning her degree included 2,000 hours of administrative training at a facility in Fond du Lac, and she also did volunteer work at a home-less shelter.

UW-Eau Claire's Health Care Administration program has a slogan which says, "A head for business and a heart for caring." Process said her strength is more in the business area of operating a long-term care facility rather than the care side, but she said she definitely respects the role Willowdale's caregivers play. "It's such an honor to be in their (the residents') lives," she said.

Willowdale made a great first impression on her, Process said. "It's a small facility with a big heart," she said. "It's like a family here." She says the same about the community as she has moved to New Holstein and has started to get active with the Chamber of Commerce.

Process said she realized quickly that the employees of Willowdale are local residents, and they are taking care of other local residents who are calling Willowdale home for either a short amount of time or long term. In many cases, nurses, aides, and others are caring for family, neighbors, and/or friends.

"There's so much heart, there's so much passion," Process said. "I think the level of care here is exceptional. We have the passion to pursue that quality of care."

While she has been in her current position for less than a year, Process has already seen some significant changes in long-term care both locally and nationally. The local change was finalized in the fall when North Shore Healthcare – based in the Milwaukee suburb of Glendale – finalized the purchase of former Atrium facilities including Homestead Care Center in New Holstein.

This marks the first time that both of New Holstein's skilled care facilities have had the same owner. "I think it's a great asset, everybody being in a small facility," Process said of the new relationship with the Homestead. "We can use them as a resource and depend on them."

Process said some sharing of resources has already started between the two facilities, adding that she expects those relationships to only grow over time.

On a national basis – but with implications at Willowdale – Process used her business skills and training to help usher in the new Patient-Driven Payment Model (PDPM) which went into effect as of October 1. PDPM focuses on the patient's



Just some of the staff members at Willowdale Health Services in New Holstein gather around Madelyn Process (front, right), the new executive director at the facility.

condition and resulting care needs rather than on the amount of care provided in order to determine Medicare payment. Process said she believes the new national reimbursement system provides for rates which are more accurate to the services being provided and will benefit long-term care facilities such as Willowdale.

Those are items of good news for an industry which – like most others – face its share of challenges. According to AARP, 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day and – although many elderly people are able to remain in their homes longer today – the inflex of Baby Boomers who will need long-term care may still be coming. “I am optimistic,” Process said about the future of long-term health care. “I think there will always be a need for long-term care.”

Willowdale has long had the benefit of having a therapy facility attached to it. A hallway connects the separate business which is contracted to provide services to Willowdale.

Melissa Voelker is in her 25th year of providing therapy services to Willowdale residents and others, and she said she is blessed to have a talented staff of seven people with whom she works and which also has longevity at the facility and in the profession.

In addition to physical, occupational, and speech therapy seven days a week, Willowdale also has a urinary incontinence therapist on staff. Voelker said urinary incontinence therapy is primarily about lifestyle and exercise and does not involve invasive procedures. She also mentioned that their speech therapists are trained in Lee Silverman Voice Treatment methods.

While Voelker said the niche of their therapy services is primarily the mature population, they also provide physician-referred therapy for people of all ages including youths recovering from athletic injuries.

Voelker said the therapy facility saw a remodeling/updating project completed last September, and Process said there are plans for renovations to take place this year in the nursing facility.

Process said she believes the compassion and family environment evident at Willowdale Health Services sets it apart from its competitors, adding that they care about their residents and the community. “There’s a lot of good things going on here,” she said.