

## To Give Person-Centered Care, Learn Your Elder's Life Story

At Dementia Care Specialists, we're excited for the future, because we're cultivating hope for people with dementia and their caregivers. Each story we tell is a celebration of a life rediscovered. We help communities facilitate person-centered care by learning the life stories of the elders they care for. We've found that when you truly understand a person's preferences, interests and background, you can successfully prevent many of the difficulties so many of our elders needlessly experience.

### Rediscovering a Sense of Self and a Sense of Home

Kim Harlan of GreenTree at Mt. Vernon recounts a common story:

*"A resident was placed in our community by her son and daughter-in-law. The son had found her living conditions to be unsafe and discovered that she was attempting to hitchhike to town to get meals. As you might imagine, when this resident came to the community she was profoundly unkempt. While our staff were trying to gain her trust to address her hygiene, we worked with her son on putting together a personalized living space for her.*

*This resident tried for the first few weeks to leave the facility. Knowing that she'd worked as a secretary, our staff would try and involve her in word search books, puzzles, stuffing envelopes, and even helping set the tables. Provided with new clothing, makeup, costume jewelry and regular hair appointments, she became more agreeable to working with our therapists on bathing and dressing behaviors. She even began to put on her makeup and dress up, taking pride in her appearance.*

*She picked up the word searches and puzzles and can work through them on her own now. She is no longer seeking to leave the community, and has settled in well with the other residents. She's more social, and she cares about her fellow residents."*

### There's A Person Behind the Personality

Tabitha DeVogel, a nurse at Provision Living at Hermitage, has a similar story:

*"We recently moved Jim into our memory care unit. He was asked to leave a competitor memory care facility because they claimed he behaved too aggressively. I spent a few hours speaking with his wife about his typical behaviors, likes, and dislikes before he moved in. With knowledge of his life story, our team made a concerted effort to individualize his care based on his needs.*

*His wife approached me a few weeks ago and said, 'We are so happy here. Thank you so much for taking such diligent care of him. Thank you for the little pats and touches. It really means a lot.'*

*Jim has successfully integrated into our memory care community with few issues. We are very pleased with the outcome!"*

## Outbursts That Aren't Really Outbursts

Finally, Ann James, Activities Manager at Provision Living St. Louis, offers another success account:

*"After one of my team members attended my [Dementia Capable Care](#) class, she put her approach training into practice almost immediately. At Happy Hour, a resident with dementia was very agitated and angry, wanting to leave, and trying to get out of her wheelchair to get away. My teammate knelt in her visual field, used her name, and asked her if she wanted to dance—she hoped to redirect her from negative outbursts.*

*Our resident sweetly smiled and nodded her head yes. My teammate then helped her to stand and the two danced together! The resident was happy and agreeable for the rest of the evening—she simply wanted some special attention and affection. What a wonderful application of this training!"*

These are just a few of the many lives we celebrate in the work that we do, and we invite you to join us in our efforts to create a Dementia Capable Society. Learn more about our [Life Story Questionnaire](#)—and download a free copy—to help facilitate person-centered memory care. It's just one of many resources [our team of consultants and trainers](#) offers to communities like yours to help support the best abilities of our elders.