Northwinds combines memory care and independent living

From the moment she first stepped into Northwinds, 84-year-old Katie Eickschen says she could tell it was a very nice place. Conveniently located on the Perham Living campus, Northwinds provides an alternative for people living with Alzheimer’s and related dementias.

“Since she was the first person to move in here after Northwinds opened in October, my mother was given first pick out of all the rooms,” explains Katie’s daughter, Connie Koehnen. Connie says her mother is a rather private person who enjoys having her own comfortable living space and ensuite bathroom. She also appreciates the beautiful courtyard view her memory care assisted living suite offers.

The comfortable, private living suites are able to accommodate 12 residents. Professional caregivers are on-site and available 24 hours a day. A licensed nurse is available for staff consult 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If it is needed, medication management is also available for residents.

Prior to coming to live at Northwinds, Katie was living with Connie and her family for the past four years. “Mother wanted to come to town. I live in the country and it was too isolated for her,” Connie says. “Even though she is otherwise very healthy, my mother needs to be monitored because of memory issues. With her memory condition we needed to find a safe environment for her to live and felt Northwinds would best suit her needs.”

“Northwinds Memory Care is a locked and secured facility designed to provide comfort and security in a supporting environment for those in need of memory care. Our staff members are specifically trained in how to care for people with memory impairment,” explains Janet Severson, Northwinds’ household coordinator.

The layout of the facility is designed with a circular floorplan for those who like to walk, allowing residents to easily navigate the campus without feeling lost or getting confused. Katie says she enjoys taking frequent walks with Janelle Fritz, resident assistant at Northwinds. “Mother is very close to Janelle,” Connie explains. “Janelle has an outgoing personality that you can’t help but like. She really helped my mother to settle in here and made her feel comfortable. When we are having nice weather they will go for walks together outside around the Perham Living campus. When it’s cold out they will still go for walks inside.”

In addition to being specifically trained to care for people with memory impairment, Northwinds staff members offer a variety of interactive activities for residents to participate in. There is a painting station set up to encourage creativity. Games and planned exercise times allow opportunities for socialization between residents and staff members.

“One of the best benefits that I see to Northwinds is that it provides my mother with a place where there are people her own age who she can be around, eat with, and be friends with. Those are some of the things

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that she was interested in finding. It helps her not get lonely,” Connie says.

Katie agrees, adding how she also appreciates that she can choose whether or not to participate in group activities. “You are always free to go back to your own apartment and do what you want to do,” she says.

At Northwinds, independence is strongly encouraged. Residents often pitch in to help with daily tasks such as cleaning, doing the laundry, and cooking up treats for guests and fellow residents. “We try not to do for residents what they can still do for themselves,” Severson explains. “We also always encourage visitors and tell them to make themselves at home—they know where the coffee and treats are and are welcome to help themselves.”

Katie enjoys baking cookies in the large common kitchen and dining area. She takes charge of folding the laundry once it’s done and brings it where it belongs. She can also frequently be found making the rounds and watering all of the plants at Northwinds. “I make sure to get them all watered and enjoy keeping busy. If I wasn’t busy I’d just go crazy,” she acknowledges.

Many Northwinds residents enjoy the intergenerational activities offered on campus. “It is such a blessing that we have the Children’s Corner and the Boys and Girls Club just down the hall so we can actively participate in intergenerational exchanges with them,” Severson says. “It is also a benefit to be located near Perham Living’s Town Center so Northwinds residents have an opportunity to interact with nursing home residents.”

She continues, “We are fortunate to have the Adult Day Service just across the hall as our participants there love to come and eat lunch, visit, and hang out with Northwinds residents too.” Northwinds residents are offered three meals a day, with the flexibility to eat out with family or friends. For Katie, that means lunch dates with her daughter and frequent dinners out with Connie’s sister-in-law Sherry Larson and her husband Greg.

“Northwinds really serves as a stepping stone for people who can no longer safely live by themselves, but who are not ready for a nursing home. Our residents still have the freedom of an independent apartment living lifestyle, but in a safe and monitored environment,” notes Severson.

When she is at Northwinds, Katie enjoys painting and playing piano. “When the meals are done and everything is quiet I like to go down to where the piano is in the family room and play music,” Katie says. Other residents frequently find their way to the family room to listen to Katie play her favorite church hymns.

Connie mentions how the piano has special significance to her mother because it used to be in the apartment she lived in at the back of Connie’s house. “I always love listening to her play piano, so I would often take my cup of coffee and just watch her play,” Connie recalls.

Now she finds herself in a similar situation, coffee in hand, watching her mother play the same songs at Northwinds, surrounded by a caring environment structured specifically to assist people with memory care needs. “They do such a wonderful job of interacting with my mother and the other residents here based on their individual needs,” Connie says.

“The fact that the staff here is trained specifically for memory care issues is the biggest thing for me,” she continues. “It is also important to me that Northwinds is staffed 24/7. It makes me feel comfortable that she is in a good place. I am glad my mother is socializing with people her own age and that people freely come and visit one another. I can’t imagine another place that would be better.”

“It is wonderful here,” Katie agrees. “People have asked me about living here and I’ve told them that it is the best place you can be when you get to be my age.”

To learn more about Northwinds as an option for yourself or a loved one, please contact Janet Severson at (218) 347-1945.

Now 84 years old, Katie Eickschen still enjoys painting, a hobby she first picked up decades ago. Katie is pictured here with one of her favorite paintings. Northwinds features an art station that residents can use whenever they feel the urge to get creative.
A team-based approach to health care

In order to better support patients and their primary care physicians, Perham Health is introducing specialized care teams. These care teams will share a group of patients, allowing providers to offer patients consistent care and giving team members the opportunity to develop stronger relationships with patients and their families.

The first care team developed at Perham Health will involve Dr. Illene Reed and Dr. Kailey Witt, along with Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) Mindy Anderson, Family Nurse Practitioner, and Annalise Shippee, Physician Assistant. Their LPNs and two RNs will make up the rest of the care team. In the fall, Perham Health plans to develop more care teams with other groups of providers.

“Patients will select their primary care provider as they usually would,” explains Perham Health Clinic Director Beth Ulschmid. “When their provider is gone, they will now be able to see a member of their care team.”

Even when a patient’s regular doctor is in the clinic, that doctor might have a full schedule. The care team approach will allow patients to meet with APPs who are familiar with their individual medical history. Perham Health’s APPs work closely with the clinic’s primary care physicians and will consult with them whenever necessary. A patient’s care team members will review his or her health plan after each clinic visit.

“This arrangement will allow patients to see the same team of people consistently. The goal is for patients not to have to see different people, but always providers from their team,” Ulschmid says. “If patients use MyChart or call in to the clinic with a question, that care team will know who they are and will be responsible for replying to the patient.”

“It is also beneficial for patients to know other people who can care for their family,” mentions Kelly Riepe, RN Clinical Supervisor at Perham Health. “That way patients don’t need to ‘start over’ with a new doctor if their provider is on vacation or otherwise unavailable.”

Due to the large number of well child visits required in the first 15 months of a child’s life, Perham Health’s first care team will start by trading off who sees newborns for these frequent visits. Providers and APPs plan to take turns seeing the newborns at every other well child appointment. This arrangement will allow all members of a child’s care team to get to know the family and become familiar with any past or present health concerns.

“Our goal in developing these care teams is to increase both patient satisfaction and provider satisfaction,” Ulschmid concludes. “The care teams will help with developing trust between patients, providers, and other members of the team. We want to give patients access to their providers, but if someone is ill and needs to be seen right away they can now see someone from their care team.”

Welcome Shannon Weir, PA-C

Perham Health is excited to introduce Shannon Weir, Physician Assistant, as the newest member of its healthcare team. Shannon joined Perham Health in January and sees patients at the KLN/Shearer’s Primary Care Clinic located in the company’s headquarters.

Shannon is a 2007 graduate from Perham High School. She attended the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities where she received a Bachelor of Arts in child psychology. From there, Shannon attended Augsburg College in Minneapolis where she obtained a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies.

Shannon’s practice consists of seeing patients in all age groups for wellness checkups, management of chronic disease processes such as diabetes or high blood pressure and also acute illness or injury visits. She is able to diagnose and treat a variety of illnesses by ordering tests and prescribing medications that are necessary to improve overall health of a patient. As a certified Physician Assistant, Shannon diagnoses and treats adults and children with a wide range of medical problems.

In her free time, Shannon enjoys spending time with her family and friends, outdoor activities including hunting and fishing, reading, playing board games, and being at the lake.

“I am very happy to be back in my hometown,” said Weir. “I look forward to the opportunity to build both personal and professional connections with the patients I serve.”

With a goal of increasing both patient satisfaction and provider satisfaction, Perham Health is forming care teams that will share a group of patients. Pictured left to right, Family Nurse Practitioner Mindy Anderson, Dr. Illene Reed, Physician Assistant Annalise Shippee and Dr. Kailey Witt, will make up the clinic’s first care team.
MEN’S night

Tuesday, April 11
5:00-8:00 p.m.
Prairie Wind Middle School
480 Coney Street W, Perham

FREE ADMISSION
Register at 218.347.1640 or email
information@perhamhealth.org

5-6:15 p.m. Free health screenings
Health services booths
Chair massage
Motorcycle driving simulator
Light meal

Presentations

6:15 p.m. PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM IDENTITY THEFT
Chief Jason Hoaby,
Perham Police Department

6:45 p.m. HEART ATTACK - BE AWARE; KNOW THE SYMPTOMS
Joshua Chapman, MD,
Internal Medicine,
Perham Health

7:15 p.m. WHAT’S HAPPENING WITH THE DNR
Chris Vinton,
DNR Conservation Officer, Division of Enforcement