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# INTERTOWN RECORD

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IT'S THE LOCAL NEWS

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INTERTOWN RECORD – THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2022



## ALZHEIMER'S:

## THE GOOD NEWS

SUNFLOWER: symbol of courage and strength for the caregiver

By GAIL MATTHEWS

**MISSION: SUPPORT CAREGIVERS, RAISE AWARENESS, ERASE STIGMA**

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**“Just like gems, each person is precious, valuable, and unique, and given the right setting and care, can shine.” ~ Teepa Snow**

It can make one's day when talking with a passionate, informed, dedicated person in whatever field. Recently, I spoke with Sean Gillery, the Director of Community Relations at Woodcrest Village. He grew up in a New Hampshire home as the only child in a four-generation household. Gillery likes to be around Seniors and after 30 years in the not-for-profit arena, joining Woodcrest is a perfect fit. The purpose of my call was to see if there is some helpful information Woodcrest could share with Caregivers. Gillery was able to tell me that at Woodcrest, the Teepa Snow way of giving quality of life to both the Caregiver and the one with Alzheimer's is Woodcrest's format.

In looking into Teepa Snow and her GEMS program, I encourage everyone in this role to seek out her thoughts, her ways, her knowledge and expertise all available online. She knows. She cares. And she

presents by role playing the most challenging situations a Caregiver faces. Her premise is that we each experience brain changes every day. Snow's GEMS Model helps the Caregiver to understand each stage by clarifying the stages, to know what is expected and how to handle each stage. With a positive approach, Snow shows how to care effectively for someone with dementia in a way that is successful for each. However, some Caregivers do not want to know what is ahead, and this is personal choice.

Gillery shared that when someone is suffering from a heart attack, it is an organ failure. Well one of the 92 dementias is an organ failure of the brain. But, think of how we handle a brain failure vs any other organ failure. He had first-hand experience in helping to take care of his stepmom who was suffering from Alzheimer's and he wishes he had known of the Teepa Snow method at the time. (Me too!) One of the pointers to pass on to other Caregivers is Gillery's observation of his stepmom who was able to respond when he “took a ride in her world.” Instead of trying to get her to do as he wanted, he found by playing music from her era, reliving her childhood, watching her do

her thing, he was able to be more effective in the care.

In using the GEM approach, Woodcrest uses observation and interaction to see if a person is ready for the Courtyard, Woodcrest's secured memory care program. Triggers include safety concerns such as wandering, difficulty integrating into a large or stimulating environment, regression from what was common social situations, need for frequent re-direction, and higher levels of anxiety. The Courtyard is smaller, quieter and the resident is always in the view of a nurse or LNA.

Rosemary Safford is one such person who offers an inordinate amount of care for each resident. She is very special. And the entire Memory Care team gives that extra TLC. While Woodcrest is not a Nursing Home and does not offer full nursing care, residents can transfer from the Assisted Living space to the Memory Care where there is security and close attention to each resident. The Caregiver must know before signing on for the care, the difference between Assisted Living, Memory Care and a Nursing Home. Very different care between the three categories.

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Woodcrest also offers Respite so that Caregivers can have a break. Respite could be a few days, a week or longer if needed. Respite is a positive service for the Caregiver who needs a break or in an emergency. Teepa Snow stresses that the Caregiver "must learn to let go." And Woodcrest's Respite program is one way. The Respite program was invaluable to me when I had to go out of state on weekends to help in the care of my 100-year-old Mom and my husband could not be in a car. He was at that stage and the care he received in Respite was excellent. Safford was but one of the many who put my mind at ease while away.

The Woodcrest Village in the center of New London is a beautiful, historic home dedicated to providing assisted living services and memory care in a gracious community setting. Woodcrest involves the community in many of the activities which helps to "fos-

ter independence, nurture spirit and encourage family and community involvement." The Brenner family has owned Woodcrest since 1988. Gary and Linda Brenner live on the premises in one of the independent cottages and their daughter Bethany is the Executive Director. Aging is a new stage of opportunity and strength. In this area we call home, we are fortunate to have places that help us achieve quality of life and Woodcrest is the GOOD NEWS.

*Find Gail Matthew's book "DID I DIE? Managing the Mayhem of Alzheimer's... A Caregiver's Guide to Peace and quality of Life" at MainStreet BookEnds in Warner, Morgan Hill Bookstore in New London or Amazon Kindle. Proceeds go to Cure Alzheimer's Fund.*

*A specially designed Sunflower pin to honor Caregivers and the Cure Alzheimer's Fund Research is available at HARRINGTON'S JEWELRY, NEWPORT, N.H.*