

WELLNESS MATTERS – Rob Olmsted

Connecting with the Care Coordinator

Today we offer something of a progress report on Lathrop's Care Coordinator, Erin Curtin. Many Townhome residents have had the chance to meet her in a variety of settings. She is reaching out and responding, sitting down with residents and getting a good initial view of Lathrop. The general question that continues to arise is "what can you do for us." The answer is rooted in 35 years of Lathrop residents together navigating the road of "aging in community." In contrast to choosing a Life Plan/Continuing Care setting, Lathrop residents have chosen the more modest and flexible options of Independent Living. The scope of services to be provided by our Care Coordinator have evolved from the shared needs expressed through the years. They reflect the intentions and aspirational commitments that have directed me as Care Coordinator over the last 8 years, during which time I have sat down with nearly 300 residents and said good bye in some way to well over 160. That is a lot of relationships, along with their wide spectrum of expectations and needs. And while there are commonalities, each household and each person's situation is unique.

The task of the Care Coordinator is ultimately to get to know you, along with the factors that may influence your road ahead. This includes knowing something about your "*web of care*" i.e. *those individuals likely to support you as your needs change*. In addition, the Care Coordinator will help connect you with Lathrop's various service teams (facilities, transportation, dining etc.) It is encouraging to see how the organization has grown and matured, with an increasingly stronger integration of these teams. And while the shared resources of the community create a significant foundation, we acknowledge that human lives and families can be messy and challenging. The hope is always to strive for best outcomes, but we know some have felt that what the organization has offered fell short of expectations, however those expectations were created.

Nonetheless, we have deepened our commitment and here we are, poised as a community to consider what more can be done to help residents navigate more securely. The Resident Councils will soon distribute the "Aging in Community Survey," arising from our Strategic Planning efforts. We are eager to hear what residents are thinking, and to explore new initiatives together. What is new is that our Care Coordinator Erin will be able to focus 100% of her time in support of helping find answers to the needs of aging residents in the Townhomes. Keep in mind, this is a 40hr/week position with the task of connecting with 186 residents currently. While many want clear answers to the question of what's possible, for now we can say that the Care Coordinator will not:

1. Provide 24/7 on-call response,
2. Serve as a health care proxy advocating for medical care decisions,
3. Guide you in selecting or purchasing health insurance,
4. Manage the care staff that you may choose to engage,
5. Share information with you about the decisions that your neighbors and their web of care are making or not making.

What can be provided falls in three general categories:

- A) Proactive Wellness - counseling and guidance toward choices you can make to reduce your risk and improve your resiliency;
- B) Planning – supporting you in developing a broad and prepared “web of care” team, fostering conversation around end of life and health care proxy engagement, and guiding consideration of contingencies that fit your circumstances;
- C) Structural change and intervention – helping connect you with certified care providers, preparing for adjustments after hospitalization and illness, and working alongside your “web” to assist in making appropriate decisions toward keeping you as safe and independent as possible, up to and possibly including transfer out of your townhome.

The Health and Wellness sections of your Resident Handbook attempts to lay out the scope of the services available. With Erin on board we feel more confident in our ability to provide those services. If you have specific questions or suggestions to help clarify the language in our publications, as always, pick up the phone or drop an email. Erin is responding to inquiries and filling up her schedule. She is eager to learn more about the needs of the Townhome community. It will take time to get to know you all, but to know what she can do, the best place to start is with a question. Don't hesitate to call.

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