

Transforming the care of individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders



seeds



Photo by Stacey Nickens

"The garden brings purpose to the residents' lives. It allows them to care for something," says Brenda Nagey, Director of Life Engagement. "It is calming, helpful and purposeful."

Making Abe's Garden Home

Settling into an engaged, purposeful life.

Now that most of the residents have moved into their new home at Abe's Garden, daily life has started to settle into a more comfortable routine.

"What's most important is to establish a flow, a routine that residents can predict, a familiarity with the people around them," says Judy Shmerling Given, Director of Campus Development and Abe's daughter.

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WHAT WE DO

Abe's Garden seeks to establish a model of residential and day/evening care programs for those with Alzheimer's disease. The goal is to transform care for those with Alzheimer's and related dementias throughout the United States by providing an unprecedented level of care for individuals diagnosed with these disorders. Equally important it will be a site of research and teaching, setting a new standard for other programs and residential communities devoted to caring for our nation's rapidly expanding senior population.





Abe's Garden received the 2015 Senior Housing News Design and Architecture award for the category of Best Stand-Alone Memory Care.

“When you walk through Abe’s Garden you feel an easiness.”

JUDY SHMERLING GIVEN

Director of Campus Development and Abe’s daughter



Photo by Stacey Nickens

important purpose,” says Brenda Nagey, Abe Garden’s Director of Life Engagement. “It made them smile with pride to know they helped the Nashville Zoo.”

As Given notes, gauging the success of any program involving people with Alzheimer’s or dementia is often notable for what



Photo by Robert Heller

you don’t see instead of what you do see. When residents are engaged, they are less likely to be anxious. “What’s not happening in that moment is anxiety, exit-seeking, or obsessive thinking such as ‘When is my

Even amid the hustle and bustle of more than 30 residents moving in over the last few months, “When you walk through Abe’s Garden you feel an easiness,” says Given.

Keeping residents engaged gives each day meaning and purpose. Activities vary — for some residents, that means discussion, music or dancing. For others, it means sensory experiences, such as hand and foot massages.

In November, the Nashville Zoo brought a special visitor to Abe’s Garden, a Palm Cockatoo that needed socialization with people and practice moving onto a stranger’s hands and arms. “The residents were very excited to not only see and touch the bird, but also to have such an



Photo by Robert Heller

Residents help socialize a Palm Cockatoo visiting from the Nashville Zoo.



Photo by Robert Heller

Weather permitting, sing-alongs, Friday evening barbecues and family visits are held in the outdoor courtyard.

daughter going to be here?’ or ‘When do I go home?’ because they’re engaged,” she says.

Staff conducts daily “huddles” to discuss communication and share ideas. “Our program is one of constant improvement — individualized to accommodate each resident’s needs and personalities,” Given says.

A letter from a resident’s daughter, who says her father has “flourished” since moving into Abe’s Garden, is a touching testament to progress. The daughter recounts the story of attending a dance at Abe’s Garden. “Daddy asked me to dance, and we danced for at least fifteen minutes,” she writes. “Daddy sang along to each song as we danced. He was enjoying the moment, and the smile on his face was priceless.”

Given is understandably proud of the accolades. “That just means the world to me,” she says. 🌸

Taking Notice

Industry professionals and thought leaders take initial steps to disseminate the Abe’s Garden model.

When Abe’s Garden opened last fall, architects, senior care professionals, physicians and others from Nashville and well beyond immediately took notice.

“The lighting and the furniture at Abe’s Garden sets it off from anything else I have seen recently,” says Ira Chilton, a Principal of ProjX LLC, a Nashville-based architectural, design and management firm. Chilton is licensed in 44 states and has overseen design and construction of buildings from Milan to Maui.

After touring Abe’s Garden, Chilton was impressed with the way the architects used lighting to help guide residents throughout the building. “The furniture is wonderful,” Chilton adds, noting, for example, that in the resident suites, each bed is designed with a sidearm.

Chilton is currently overseeing design of the West Maui Hospital and Medical Center in Maui, Hawaii, slated to open in two years. The campus will have a hospital, skilled-nursing, and assisted-living residences, plus a medical office building and clinic.

He is looking at adopting some of the Abe’s Garden features, such as lighting and memory boxes, for the assisted-living community there.

Chilton says he is keeping an eye on progress at Abe’s Garden, and how initiatives with Vanderbilt Center for Quality Aging differentiate the Abe’s Garden program from other Alzheimer’s care programs.

G. Allen Power, MD, FACP, a nationally recognized geriatrician, author and educator, also recently toured Abe’s Garden, expressing his interest in the Abe’s Garden model. “I really am impressed with all of the planning and thought you are putting into this,” Power told his tour guides, Beth Zeitlin and Andrew Sandler, PhD.

Power is a clinical associate professor of medicine at the University of Rochester, and author of two books: *Dementia Beyond Drugs: Changing the Culture of Care* and *Dementia Beyond Disease: Enhancing Well-Being*.

Power’s tour of Abe’s Garden will likely result in collaborations focused on elevating dementia care at Abe’s Garden and throughout the nation. 🌸



Photo by Leslie Raney

G. Allen Power, MD, FACP, tours Abe’s Garden.

Bathing Without a Battle

A case for person-centered care versus task-centered hygiene.

Bathing and showering is often a struggle for the frail and elderly, especially for patients with Alzheimer's and related dementias who may be frightened of getting undressed — or even the sound of running water.

Imagine a world where bathing is more spa-like. Bathing can be enjoyable with the right techniques. At Abe's Garden, the "Bathing Without a Battle" approach* has been incorporated, making sure bathing is person-centered versus task-centered.

While Abe's Garden care partners personalize the bathing experience for every resident depending on their needs, likes and dislikes, here are some key highlights of the "Bathing Without a Battle" approach developed by faculty at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:



Photo by Jackson Zeitlin

Care partners Ruth Givens and Monica Flowers prepare to assist a resident with bathing.

Put the person before the task.

Talk to the individual while bathing, explain what you plan to do, and ask for their consent. Make sure the pace is slow and gentle, not forced. "Think of the shower or bath not as a task to be done, but as an activity occurring as part of the relationship," advises Joanne Rader, MS, RN, an author of *Bathing Without a Battle*.



Avoid embarrassment.

Keep the individual covered with towels during bathing and showering. This also helps keeps them warm. Being cold is a common fear.



Avoid common pitfalls.

"Having water on the face and head is one of the most distressing parts of a shower for people with dementia," says Rader. Instead, offer warm washcloths to residents and ask if they would like to wash their own faces.

The following products are used at Abe's Garden to accommodate individual bathing needs and preferences. They may be purchased at Amazon.com or from medical supply companies:

Clean Life No Rinse Shampoo

Clean Life No Rinse Body Wash

Medline Soothe and Cool No Rinse Shampoo and Body Wash

Sage Comfort Personal Cleansing Barrier Cream Cloths

**Bathing Without a Battle: Person-directed Care of Individuals with Dementia (2nd ed.)*. Barrick, A.L., Rader, J., Hoeffler, B., Sloane, P.D., and Biddle, S. (Eds.). (2008). New York, N.Y.: Springer Publishing Co.
The "Bathing Without a Battle" DVD can be purchased at <http://bathingwithoutabattle.unc.edu>.

Here are some of the I'm Still Here™ evidence-based techniques incorporated into daily life at Abe's Garden:

- 1. Invite participation.** Avoid questions that might lead to a "yes" or "no" answer. A better option is: "I need your help." Always provide two choices, such as, "Would you like to help with the cooking club or the film committee?"
- 2. Demonstrate when providing instructions.** Mirroring, or *showing* residents how to do a task, is often more successful than telling them how. A care partner might brush his/her teeth along with the resident.
- 3. Lead engagement at a slow pace.** For people living with Alzheimer's and dementia, the rule of thumb is to wait. Match your speed to the participants. Slow movements help them feel more in control.
- 4. Give each participant something to hold.** Instead of just describing an activity, give a resident an object to hold that represents that activity, such as tools for gardening and/or cooking, or the words to a sing-a-long.
- 5. Encourage discussion.** Group leaders use "Threading™," a technique to encourage discussion. A discussion group may start with the topic of coffee, and end up talking about Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart.

END RESULT
Residents are talking,
enjoying their discussion
and being engaged.



Photo by Moises Paz

I'm Still Here™

Evidence-based techniques engage residents.

If you're having a conversation with a person with dementia about coffee, and along the way the discussion veers into traveling in Africa, that's quite all right.

At Abe's Garden, care partners and staff use I'm Still Here™ Montessori-based activity principles and techniques developed by The Hearthstone Institute to communicate with residents and engage them in conversation and other initiatives. They are trained to encourage conversation, wherever it may lead. 🌍

Volunteer Spotlight

Nashville photographers donate their time and talents to capture special moments at Abe's Garden.



CLARK THOMAS

www.simplephotographs.com

Photographer Clark Thomas seeks “immersion in the moment” to create strong portraits. “I respond to vitality and presence more than facial expression or pose,” he says of his process. Thomas feels photographing human beings is always meaningful and very satisfying. He’s made well over 22,000 portraits since he started photography at age 15.

Since he lost his father to the disease in 2010, Thomas has photographed many families impacted by Alzheimer’s. “I feel great empathy for the families who have to endure the slow and painful loss,” he says. “Honest, empathetic portraits seem to help families value and appreciate each other, both during and after the long emotional process.”



HUNTER ARMISTEAD

www.hunterarmistead.com

Native Nashvillian Hunter Armistead says he has a talent for putting his subjects at ease. “I have a very honest and authentic approach toward people,” he says. “I get more than the grip and grin.”

Armistead has been volunteering at Abe’s Garden photographing members of the board of directors. At the top of his priority list: helping subjects relax and establishing good lighting. “Lighting is key,” he says. “It puts people literally in their best light.” Armistead specializes in commercial and editorial work, from annual reports to magazines and family portraits.



ROBERT HELLER

www.hellerpackpix.com

As a former sports photojournalist, Bobby Heller has photographed everything from the Olympics to the PGA. While attending film school in Los Angeles in the 1980s, Heller started shooting the Lakers, the Dodgers and other sports teams, and worked as a professional photojournalist for many years.

Heller has been volunteering at Abe’s Garden for several years, most recently photographing grand opening events and resident engagement. “I try to capture a moment that everyone can relate to,” he says. “It’s always expressed in the eyes and face.”

GUIDING LIVES WITH PURPOSE

Licensed clinical social worker Beverly Theis provides guidance and support for residents and their families.



Photo by Hunter Armistead

Beverly Theis

In her role as a clinical social worker, Beverly Theis is a key member of a team closely watching over the hearts and minds of Abe's Garden residents.

Theis is one of the first staff members that families and residents meet, and she stays in contact with residents after they move to Abe's Garden, counseling residents and their families every day.

She loves meeting residents at that first get-together in their homes. "I get a full sense of who they are and what is most important to them," Theis says. "I have been able to sing with residents and listen as they play the piano."

Residents with Alzheimer's and related dementias (ADRD) can continue to enjoy their interests — and learn new ones. "The fortitude of the human spirit is alive and well here at Abe's Garden," she says.

Theis has a wealth of experience in the field of aging, most recently in cardiology and thoracic care at Vanderbilt Medical Center, where she worked with patients

and families in crises related to surgery and acute events. She also has experience in palliative care for patients with ADRD, and was instrumental in the start-up of the TN Choices Program for the elderly and disabled.

In her current role, Theis assesses residents' needs and completes cognitive and behavior tools that are used as a benchmark for tracking how residents are responding to the Abe's Garden approach. She also provides supportive therapy for residents who may be experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety or who just need some one-on-one support.

"A highlight of my day is meeting with residents and seeing them experience a sense of purpose," she says, "and I love it when I get to see residents making new memories with their family members."

Theis also finds it rewarding to watch residents learn, grow, and help each other. "One thing that is really heart-warming is when we see residents caring for one another," she says. "It says a lot about their capacity to continue caring for others." 🌸

"My first professional love is working with people with dementia. I feel my heart is closely connected with the residents and their families."

BEVERLY THEIS



Thought Leaders on Hopeful Aging

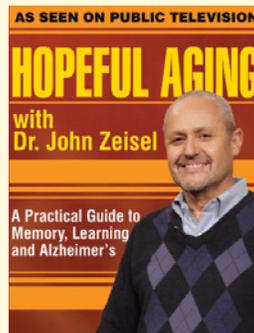
New Abe's Garden board members discuss aging with meaning.

WHEN ASKED TO DEFINE improving quality of life for seniors, Steve Moran, publisher of the website, seniorhousingforum.net, first draws this analogy: "There's been this thinking that senior living ought to be like a luxury cruise ship, a five-star hotel," he says.

"But what if I told you were going to go live on a cruise ship and never get off?" he asks.

In a discussion with John Zeisel, PhD., founder of The Hearthstone Institute™, Moran notes that the promise of a pampered, leisurely life may sound appealing on the surface. But in reality, he says, most of us need more meaning in our lives.

"There's good research and data that tell us that people who live with purpose, who live a mindful life, live longer, happier, healthier lives," says Moran. "And in particular, we know that there are lower rates of cognitive decline."



Helping residents with Alzheimer's and related dementias find that purpose is key, agree Zeisel and Moran. For example, that might mean asking a resident interested in politics to lead a discussion group rather than just listen to a discussion.

Also, they suggest, be open to new passions residents might develop. Adds Zeisel: "Just because we used to do something, that doesn't mean we want to continue doing it. The real issue is to learn, explore and discover."

Zeisel and Moran, both thought leaders in the ongoing conversation about aging with dignity, are among the newest members of the Abe's Garden board of directors. 

Watch episodes of Zeisel's TV show, "Hopeful Aging," including one featuring Steve Moran and one featuring Abe's Garden CEO, Andrew Sandler at: <https://youtu.be/8nya8xc44m0>.