

# Senior Living

AN ADVERTISING FEATURE



Ann Zar-Taub celebrates the season at the Parker at Stonegate holiday party.

## Guide to choosing an assisted living residence

An assisted-living residence is a good option for seniors who need help with some aspects of daily living, such as cooking meals, taking medication, cleaning the house and traveling to appointments. The community also provides a secure environment with emergency call systems in place. When in need of more assistance than family, friends and in-home help can provide, individuals should consider moving to an assisted living residence.

There are 10 qualities to keep in mind while visiting assisted living residences:

**Contentment.** When visiting an assisted living community, speak to the people who live there and find out how they feel about the home. Do you see people socializing and laughing? Are the residents participating in activities and clubs? Do they like the environment and the food? Is the home located near family and friends?

**Homelike.** The assisted living residence is clean, comfortable and nicely decorated, with plants and artwork. The dining room uses real dishes and silverware — no paper or plastic. There are areas where small groups can gather and enjoy activities together or watch TV.

**Autonomy.** The residents should be treated with respect and dignity. They have the freedom to do whatever they can for themselves. Their choices and wishes are encouraged and respected.

**Amenities.** The assisted living community has a health and wellness center where one can exercise and learn about wellness. In addition, there is a hair salon, a library and an area for worship similar to a chapel. The community should be located near to other amenities, such as restaurants, theaters and shopping malls. The home provides transportation for group outings.

**Plants, pets and children.** There is greenery both inside and outside the building, with manicured grounds and areas to walk and

socialize. Residents can have small to mid-sized dogs or cats living with them. Many assisted living residences have visits from local children to brighten up the residents' day.

**Excellent nutritious food.** For health and for pleasure, dining together with friends is an important social experience. When visiting an assisted living community, ask to try the cuisine. The food should be high-quality, nutritious and freshly prepared.

**Bedroom or suite.** The suite should be comfortable and include a kitchenette and a bathroom with a shower. Privacy is important and the resident should be in control of his/her personal space and time.

**Personalized plan.** The residence should have a team that sets up a personalized plan that meets residents' physical and emotional needs and accommodates for any disabilities that an individual may have.

**Additional assistance.** If a resident requires a higher level of care, such as taking medication, assistance with bathing or dressing, services are available. The goal is to allow people to "age in place."

**Social activities.** There should be interesting activities and events available daily, including nights and weekends. Among the main reasons seniors move in to an assisted living community is to ease the loneliness they experience living alone.

There are some excellent resources on the Internet that will assist in finding an assisted living residence. LeadingAge.org provides news and case studies about assisted living on its website. Alfa.org provides a checklist of traits to look for in an assisted living community. NewLifestyles.com and SeniorBlueBook.com are free resources that offer additional information about assisted living residences in the area. ♦

— By Fern Marder, Parker Home

## Aiding seniors, families with challenges of aging

Older adult services at Jewish Family Service of MetroWest assist seniors and their families on coping with challenges related to aging and help seniors live in their homes with dignity for as long as possible.

JFS MetroWest provides clinical, nutritional, social and case management services. JFS's Solutions to Senior Hunger initiative, a response to the escalating number of seniors age 50 and older struggling for food, conducts Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach and education and administers SNAP application assistance. Solutions to Senior Hunger is a national initiative from MAZON, a Jewish Response to Hunger.

JFS offers mental health counseling and support groups that address issues associated with aging. Case management provides assistance in qualifying for entitlements, connection to supportive services, including home modifications, home health aides, friendly visiting services and money management.

JFS MetroWest offers services for caregivers, too. Care Consultation helps caregivers identify services and provide guidance and support. The Alzheimer's Family Care Program helps caregivers manage care at home, understand the disease and work through challenges. The Music and Memory program creates personalized playlists using iPod shuffles. This enables those struggling with Alzheimer's and dementia to reconnect with the world through music-triggered memories.

Kosher Meals on Wheels delivers meals to homebound seniors in Hudson County. The Chai Café at the Bayonne JCC provides lunch, socialization and health education programs. Tai Chi is offered weekly by the Arthritis Foundation. Café Europa is a social support group for Holocaust survivors offering lunch and programming services that meets twice monthly. A grant from the Conference on Material Claims Against Germany provides in-home services to financially and physically eligible Holocaust survivors.

For more information on senior services and support groups, call (973) 765-9050 or visit [www.jfsmetrowest.org/services/for-older-adults](http://www.jfsmetrowest.org/services/for-older-adults).

Jewish Family Service of MetroWest is a comprehensive social service agency providing services on a non-discriminatory basis. For children and families, JFS provides individual, couple, child and family counseling, play therapy, support groups, school and synagogue based social work services, and family life education. Rachel Coalition, a division of JFS, provides domestic violence services for members of the family affected by domestic violence. For information, call (973) 765-9050 or visit [jfsmetrowest.org](http://jfsmetrowest.org). ♦

## Sharing holidays with loved ones suffering from memory loss

The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy when families and friends gather to share each other's company, revisit fond stories of holidays past and make new memories to last a lifetime. But what if a loved one is no longer able to remember the holidays or the family and friends he or she has spent them with? What if dementia or Alzheimer's has robbed a parent or grandparent of the ability to make and cherish new memories?

"More than 5 million people are living with Alzheimer's and the disease particularly impacts caregivers and other loved ones during the holiday season," said Kelly Scott of Brookdale, which operates more than 550 Alzheimer's and dementia care communities. "Despite the stress and sadness Alzheimer's can cause, it is possible to create comfort and happiness for everyone during the holidays."

Scott offers advice to help caregivers and families navigate the holidays:

- Encourage visits, even if loved one's memory loss makes visitors uncomfortable. Socialization is important for people with Alzheimer's or dementia — and for the people who take care of them. Prepare guests for the changes in a loved one, especially if the visitors have not seen him or her in a while.
- Encourage reminiscing and storytelling of favorite holiday memories and traditions.



Sharing memories and storytelling often help individuals suffering with Alzheimer's disease or dementia to feel engaged and purposeful during visits with family and friends.

Often, long-term memories are the strength of individuals with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Telling stories of childhood and early adult life can help them feel engaged and purposeful during visits with families and friends.

• As much as possible, involve a loved one in preparing food, wrapping gifts and other familiar holiday traditions. Participating in familiar routines and tasks will promote their self-esteem and provide a sense of purpose during this special time.

• If possible, plan to have family gatherings and activities at home, in surroundings familiar to an individual's memory-impaired loved one. Holiday travel can be stressful for everyone, but it can be especially confusing and upsetting to people with Alzheimer's or dementia. Receive visitors early in the day when the person is less likely to feel fatigued and watch for signs that a loved one is tiring — such as irritability, confusion or agitation.

• Eating out is possible, but it's best to make reservations so you can avoid a long wait, and you should check out the menu online before going to ensure a loved one has dining options. Avoid noisy restaurants or buffets that offer

too many options that might confuse a loved one. Dine in smaller, more manageable groups.

• Avoid situations that can cause confusion or frustration for people with memory loss, such as large crowds of people who will expect ones loved one to remember them, loud conversations or loud music, unfamiliar surroundings and lighting that is too bright or too dark.

• Take care of yourself. Caring for someone with memory loss is time-consuming and stressful. It's OK to accept help, especially during the holidays when one may experience physical and emotional exhaustion. If family members want to help, give them specific ideas for how they can aid you.

"Caregivers provided more than 17.7 billion hours of unpaid care to people with Alzheimer's or dementia in 2013," Scott said. "Their financial contribution is valued at \$220 billion, but their contribution of love, patience and understanding is beyond measure. Everyone should be able to enjoy the holidays, both caregivers and their loved ones." ♦

— Brandpoint

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