



Loretto Opens New Memory Care Unit to Address Local Demand

Syracuse, NY (December 15, 2022) – The demand for dedicated memory care services in Central New York has continued to increase, far beyond what our community can currently support. That’s why Loretto is opening a new Memory Special Care Unit [MSCU] on January 2, 2023. With the support of some grant funding, Loretto has invested \$750,000 in renovating an entire floor of its main campus to support the unique needs of those in the most advanced stages of the disease. After 9 months of planning followed by 3 months of construction, the new 12th floor unit will offer 30 individual rooms for long-term memory care residents.

With a focus on meeting each resident’s individual needs based on the complexity of their disease, Loretto’s 12th floor will incorporate a new wholistic approach. Using an emerging Montessori care philosophy, the environment will be filled with cues and memory supports that enable individuals to care for themselves, others, and their community. Staff in this unit will undergo a detailed training program to prepare the team to deliver this Montessori-based approach to specialized care.

“Our memory care programs are based on the most up-to-date, evidenced-based research. As the region’s leader in memory care, we focus on improving the well-being of individuals with Alzheimer’s and other dementing illnesses through therapeutic means and supporting them in meeting the challenges of their late-life stages,” said Loretto President and CEO Kim Townsend. “We believe that those living in our memory care unit desire a quality life and we are here to support them within their individual capacity and culture, by anticipating needs and providing comfort, autonomy, and security.”

Loretto estimates that more than a third of residents across its system have a diagnosis of dementia and that number is expected to increase. Currently, 410,000 people aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer’s in New York today, and that number is expected to grow by close to 15% by 2025. Additionally, Loretto recently completed a comprehensive needs assessment of CNY’s aging population and created an action plan to address unmet needs, which led to the expansion of Loretto’s dedicated memory care space to meet this increased demand for dementia services.

The once traditional clinical space has been transformed into a neighborhood that provides the latest in memory care while allowing residents to maintain a sense of freedom in a safe environment. The space incorporates innovative technologies and designs from the most cutting-edge approach to memory care including:

- Elevators, doors and walls camouflaged with landscapes and familiar home scenes to trigger memories, direct residents, and keep them safe.
- A neighborhood-feel complete with unique doors, “house” numbers and exterior porch lights for each resident’s room to enhance recognition.
- A dedicated gathering room to encourage activity-based family visits and other gathering areas that reflect park settings to bring the outside “in”, so residents still feel connected to the outdoors.
- Wayfinding cues to make walking more enjoyable, allowing residents a level of independence.
- Lighting and window treatments to optimize use of natural light.
- Sensory stimulation through touch, sounds, and a scent system to help residents feel calm and remember simple pleasures.
- Special flooring that mitigates fall risk, is gentle on joints, and allows residents to walk safely and comfortably.
- Specialized chairs and recliners to assist in maintaining independence and supporting postural and functional needs.



- And new technologies – including the It’s Never Too Late (“iN2L”) program, animatronic pets, and a dedicated music room to help residents benefit from calming sounds and interactive games, stimulate memory and reduce agitation.

The addition of this new Memory Special Care Unit will allow even more residents to receive the most innovative dementia care while living as independently as possible. Loretto has successfully used several of these innovative features over the past three years, since it opened a first-of-its-kind memory care unit on the 11th floor of this building before the pandemic hit in 2019.

The individualized care plans for residents living on the MSCU will be enhanced by the nationally recognized Montessori approach to dementia care, which looks at each person and creates an arranged environment, filled with cues and memory supports, that nurtures the needs of each resident and promotes independence through the progression of the disease.

The Montessori model has proven that the lives of memory care residents can be enriched through engagement in daily routines and activities, fostering a sense of belonging and well-being – such as participating in a welcome committee, delivering mail, setting up for meals, tending to an indoor garden, and other specific tasks that give residents a sense of purpose. The goal for each resident is to partake in activities that are meaningful to the individual, feel useful, apply life-skills, and enhance cognitive stimulation and physical activity. According to the Center for Applied Research in Dementia, the Montessori model has also resulted in fewer drugs needed, fewer responsive behaviors, and healthier happier residents.

Each resident in this new unit will undergo a comprehensive assessment—which includes nutrition, cognition, mood, functional abilities, medical care needs, and preferred activities—to determine the best holistic approach to each individual’s care, as well as identify the best roles and activities to help them thrive.

This unit will be staffed by an interdisciplinary team that includes medical staff, nursing, social worker, dietitian, recreation therapist, residents, family members, and other health professionals as needed. And the investment in developing advanced skills through additional training programs not only benefits the residents, it also provides frontline healthcare workers with upgraded skills and career paths in specialized care.

Loretto is actively hiring for hundreds of positions across the entire organization at this time.

For photos, video, and information about memory care at Loretto, visit <https://lorettocny.org/MSCUmedia>.

About Loretto

Loretto is a leader in comprehensive healthcare services in Central New York. As the fourth largest healthcare provider and the sixth largest employer in the region, the 2,500 exceptional people at Loretto’s 19 locations deliver extraordinary care to close to 10,000 people of all ages, income levels, and care needs in Onondaga and Cayuga counties each year. From adult day programs and short-term rehabilitation to the home-like settings in its assisted living communities and skilled nursing facilities, Loretto is actively investing in its employees, in medical research, and in new technologies to improve care in our community, Making Every Day Extraordinary. Loretto: exceptional people. Extraordinary care.

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