

# Senior Living Facility Celebrates 1st Anniversary

By Carol Graham

When a 99-year-old resident of Livermore Valley Senior Living received an iPad from his grandchild, volunteers were there to teach him how to play games on it.

"One cannot overestimate the value of this kind of therapy for the elderly," said Jill Biggs, RN and Director of Volunteer Services for Hope Hospice. "Volunteers play cards, checkers and other games, providing patients with activities and companionship. Their families experience relief knowing there are others providing emotional and social stimulation for their loved one."

As Livermore Valley Senior Living (LVSL) celebrated its one-year anniversary on October 21st, administrators, volunteers and family members were on hand to share what they've learned about helping loved ones transition to assisted living.

"Moving Mom out of her home to another state with unfamiliar surroundings was very difficult for everyone," said Dave Frank. "LVSL welcomed Mom and helped make her feel cared for and secure. The staff are very engaged with the residents. They take time to pamper her, painting her nails and curling her hair. We also liked that we were able to personalize her room with our choice of paint color, her own furniture, and personal effects."

Located at 3356 East Avenue, LVSL is ahead of the curve by offering an environment that blends top-notch medical care with the cozy warmth of home.

"We have an enhanced care model that bridges the gap between assisted living and skilled nursing," said Co-owner and CEO Jasleen Dhillon. "We have nurses on staff every day, and each resident is



Monce Padilla and Zae Miller prepare a room for a guest.

Photo - Doug Jorgensen

assigned a nurse as a case manager. We also have a staff physician who visits monthly and works closely with our residents and their families. Most importantly, we create a partnership with the families of our residents to facilitate the transition into our community, as well as for ongoing compassionate care."

In fact, it's this type of partnering that most effectively enhances the transition of a patient into assisted living.

"It's a team effort. Families, caregivers, doctors and the residents themselves are all partners in care," said Dhillon. "Families know the resident intimately and can work with us to make them comfortable and happy. For example, family members can decorate the bedrooms with familiar items, and suggest favorite activities and TV shows. They

can let us know whether a resident is shy and needs a lot of quiet time, or is social and wants to be in the middle of the action."

Two months ago, when Helen Shirley needed more attention than she'd been receiving at a memory-care facility, she moved to LVSL.

"This is a very attractive facility inside and out, with the park-like patio," said husband John Shirley. "The care givers are all very nice, attentive, truly interested in Helen and her needs, and respond very fast when needed. She likes her care givers, and they like her."

"Our residents transition to assisted living more smoothly when they know their families haven't abandoned them, and that they will see them often," said Dhillon. "Although patients' health issues may continue to escalate, it be-

comes equally if not more important to place an emphasis on caring for elders' emotional well being."

To benefit residents, assisted living and skilled nursing facilities are beginning to focus more on offering programs designed to keep elders active, engaged and upbeat.

At LVSL, one such program is pet therapy. "Many patients have had pets for many years and miss that relationship," said Dhillon. "Dr. Pat Wheeler and her assistants bring in therapy dogs on a weekly basis. The unconditional love of a pet has been proven to lower stress, offer mental stimulation and create a renewed interest in life."

Other programs include gardening, memory walks, and music and dance performances, while an inter-generational program at LVSL opens the door for children and teens to

interact with patients.

"The elderly have so much rich wisdom and knowledge and so many wonderful stories," said Dhillon, noting that the young visitors often help patients write their biographies. "It truly is a blessing to spend time with them every day."

Additionally, Hope Hospice volunteers visit patients regularly.

"Many people are not aware of the benefits of receiving hospice care earlier on their pathway," said Biggs. "Society sees hospice as the last place one goes when death is imminent. On the contrary, hospice is a vital way of living during the course of a terminal illness. Most of the time, patients can be admitted into a hospice program like Hope Hospice and enjoy its many benefits for months before the time of death."

Biggs added that when elder care is performed solely by family members, "It's a 24/7 task that offers no relief from one day to the next. Often patients' needs continue and increase, creating mental and physical exhaustion for those providing care. I gain great satisfaction from my role providing volunteers for patients to have companionship and for the family to have respite."

At LVSL, Dhillon is adding a new Respite Care program for seniors who are interested in part-time or short-term care.

"Seniors can be dropped off at our facility during the day to be properly cared for while relatives are at work or busy," she said. "This will be a great way for seniors to be assisted during the day-time but continue living at home. It will also help caregivers who are going out of town and need someone to take care of their relative."

All agree that knowing and understanding options is essential for caregivers facing the admittance of a loved one into assisted living.

"It's hard to see a person who's been strong and independent for 60 or 70 years unable to do for themselves many of the most basic tasks. It's a challenge to help residents maintain their sense of dignity and self-respect," said Dhillon. "Yet it's the small moments that are the most heartwarming, like when we really connect with a resident and they smile, laugh, and feel respected, loved and genuinely good about themselves. We treat our residents as if they were our own parents and grandparents. At LVSL, we've become like family."

For more information, visit [livermorevalleyse-niorliving.com](http://livermorevalleyse-niorliving.com) or [hopehospice.com](http://hopehospice.com).