New ownership, same mission for dementia care center

By Lindsay Peyton

Health

The name’s the same at the Dementia Day Center, as are the faces inside the building. But changes have been made behind the scenes to secure the future of the facility for adults with dementia and their caregivers. And that was our purpose.

The nonprofit CarePartners took over operation of the center, located at 3838 Aberdeen Way near Bellaire, at the beginning of the year.

Making the switch in ownership as seamless as possible for patients was part of the plan. With dementia, disruptive changes can cause panic or stress.

CarePartners worked for months with former owners BakerRipley, a Houston-based nonprofit, to sustain the standard of care for clients and their families.

All employees were able to retain their roles, and the program continues to operate the same way as in years past.

Established in 1986 as a sister arm of the Shatter- ing Arms, it was the first dementia day care center in Texas — and the only one in Houston to serve adults with moderate to late-stage dementia.

The space offers care for 30 clients and 300 family caregivers each year.

“The purpose of the Dementia Day Center was to be there for families that they didn’t have options,” said CarePartners president and CEO Andrea Scott. And she would know.

Before assuming her current post, she served as the center’s executive director for a decade.

“I loved the fact that I could be there for both the person with dementia, as well as the caregiver,” Scott said.

CarePartners formed in 1986, opening in its original location with a small staff and in adelete of only a few family members.

In the years since, more treatment options became available for Houstonians, particularly in Alzheimer’s disease. And CarePartners shifted its mission to serving those with memory impairments.

Andrea Williams, who did not have access to care services when her father was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, said.

“Adding the Dementia Day Center was one of the best things we ever did,” she explained. “It was for our father and our family and our community.”

In the meantime, care centers were established around Houston hosted a full day of activities, including dance, cooking classes, music, drama, chair yoga, Zumba, Tai chi and meditation.

“There is no typical day,” she said. “Every day is different.”

That was common, she said. People don’t know about the way they should. They don’t want to be there for the hard work of Alzheimer’s. If we want to do something for our community, we believe it is the least they can do.

BakerRipley had announced plans to close the Dementia Day Center by October 2021, following a two-year assessment of its operations and sustainability of the programs and services.

“We were concerned about the needs and the strengths of our community,” said Communications Director Andrea Scott. “The program is also in the midst of a strategic planning process.

“The amount of support provided during this transition shows we need to value it,” she said. “We want to determine how to be an even bigger resource for the city. Our board and staff are committed to that.”

Kevin Jacobs added that the calendar is full of activities, including dance, cooking classes, music, drama, chair yoga, Zumba, Tai chi and meditation.

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There was a pause for when the weather is nice, a listening area, a room for family members with memory impairments and arip that is neither preventable nor curable. In addition, Alzheimer’s is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S.

Scott says she wants to make sure caregivers get help, too.

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BakerRipley announced plans to close the Dementia Day Center in October 2018, following a two-year assessment of the program’s sustainability and programs with a goal of around $250 million in March 2019. Of that, 88 percent of nursing home care is covered by insurance. She said.

“We are the best-kept secret in Houston,” says Williams, center.

Communications Manager Lindsay Peyton is a Houston-based freelance writer.

Photos by Mark Mulligan / Staff photographer

Dementia Day Center director Andrea Williams, center, talks with a member as they participate in a drum circle.

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