

Commitment to Quality Care

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— James Nyberg, MPA, Director of LeadingAge RI.

LeadingAge RI Provides Comfort to Seniors & Families



A DAY AT THE BEACH Each summer, residents of Saint Antoine Community's Special Care Unit spend a day at the beach. Last year, the group went to Galilee Beach in Narragansett, where Maureen Bessette (center) relives past memories of spending time there with her children years ago thanks to help from Lisa Schenk, Special Care Unit activities coordinator (left) and nursing assistant Amanda Heywood (right).

As the landscape of healthcare and long-term care options continues to change at a pace never-before-seen, many seniors and their families often struggle navigating a complex system to find the best care that fits their specific needs.

In a world dominated by conglomerate-type healthcare providers, it's never been more important than now to have a trusted resource to turn to for questions and direction that impacts the well-being of a loved one. This is why people have confidence in LeadingAge RI, the focus of this month's A Worthy Cause feature.

Founded in 1989 as a membership organization consisting solely of nonprofit providers of aging services, LeadingAge RI represents a constellation of care for older Rhode Islanders and their families. Its diverse membership includes nursing homes, assisted living facilities, senior housing providers, and adult day health services. Part of the national LeadingAge—an association made up of more than 6,000 nonprofit organizations across the country—members of this local group help thousands of Rhode Island seniors every day.

“At LeadingAge RI, we truly believe in the not-for-profit difference,” says James Nyberg, MPA, Director of LeadingAge RI. “All of our members are mission-driven with an unwavering commitment to care; their primary focus is people and quality of life, and that is the benefit seniors, their families and caregivers receive.”

As individuals age, their needs change greatly. However, constants always remain: a desire to remain independent and living in their home, the need to socialize and be active with peers, compassionate care, and more. This is where the diverse membership of LeadingAge RI excels.

“Our members believe that the most important thing they can do is promote the greatest quality of life, care, and independence among those they serve,” says Nyberg. “There's such an incredible range of service and expertise within our organization that we're able to provide the appropriate care in a setting that is unique to each individual, especially in the place that they call home.”

Though each senior's needs vary depending on their individual circumstances, the most popular services that older Rhode Islanders and their families turn to LeadingAge RI for help with include long-term nursing home care, short-term rehabilitation



FUN FOR ALL Residents of Tockwotton on the Waterfront enjoy the home's annual Clambake with family, friends and staff. The activity is one of many coordinated by Tockwotton throughout the year.



LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

Saint Elizabeth Manor resident Ralph Walmbolt and Administrator Beth Russell prepare for a scenic flight over Newport aboard a vintage airplane — a wish come true for Ralph thanks to Saint Elizabeth Community's "The Wish Project." Saint Elizabeth Community is a proud member organization of LeadingAge RI.

to recover from an injury and return home, and residential living options such as assisted living and housing apartments specific to seniors.

A sampling of LeadingAge RI member organizations includes St. Elizabeth Home, Winslow Gardens, Tockwotton on the Waterfront, To Life Adult Day Center, Saint Antoine Residence, Shalom Housing, Cornerstone Adult Services, Mount St. Rita, and

dozens more. As a great resource for those seeking information, the LeadingAge RI website (www.LeadingAgeRI.org) lists each of the organization's partner providers on its Members page, including a description of the quality care each provides.

Because services that help seniors age in place remains one of the most sought-after aspects of LeadingAge RI's work, its membership places additional focus on making this a reality.

"There is an enormous desire among the seniors served through our members to remain independent for as long as possible," says Nyberg. "There will always be a need for nursing home care, but with a greater focus on the resources and services available in the community, and by helping individuals and families access them, seniors can remain living in their home longer, which often allows for greater quality of life."

Whether through providing meals and supportive services coordination, a nursing home to help a senior safely transition back to the community, or an adult day center that offers care to an elder and relief to their caregiver, LeadingAge RI serves as an important resource.

Above and beyond its work to help seniors and their families identify care options and resources, LeadingAge RI actively advocates for the alignment of public policies that connects the needs of older adults with the efforts of its membership. Touted as "Expanding the world of possibilities for aging," the organization promotes the independence and dignity of seniors.

"Our growing older population is a huge accomplishment; one that we should all be proud of," says Nyberg. "However, an aging population also presents challenges in terms of the need and having to rethink how we can help people care for themselves, or how to provide direct care to seniors when they need it most."

Nyberg is quick to point out that today's transformative time in health and aging services has led to exciting new ideas and models of providing care that not only focus on improving quality, but also affordability. This shift in philosophy is moving towards providing care based on an individual's needs and wishes, and not an institutional-oriented 'one-size-fits-all' approach to care.

"We need to make sure that aging services are more of a priority—caring for a growing older population should be a significant issue at state and national levels, but when was the last time it came up during a

political campaign," adds Nyberg. "There needs to be a commitment by elected leaders to help create the next generation of aging services that is responsive to the changing needs of the aging population. I think it is not only possible, but inevitable given our state and our nation's changing demographics."

While fully dedicated to its aspirations for the future, LeadingAge RI also recognizes that one of the biggest barriers for seniors and their families today is a lack of understanding the resources and services available to them. With this in mind, the organization regularly participates in committees, work groups and initiatives around aging services to keep its members updated on the latest information and trends. Each of its member organizations features staff that specialize in assisting individuals with accessing information and services, whether through their own program or a sister organization within LeadingAge RI.

"The system for senior care resources can often be complicated and fragmented," says Nyberg. "Often-times, people from the community come directly to our members because they know them by reputation or experience."

On Friday, March 20, LeadingAge RI will host its Annual Conference and Trade Show at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick. Organized to help the community, its member organizations and other aging services providers continue their education on a wide-range of topics, LeadingAge RI secures expert speakers to help attendees learn about new developments in long-term care, obtain critical information, and be inspired to think about new ways to improve their care and services. There will also be a selection of breakout sessions and Continuing Education Units.

Additional information about this year's Conference and Trade Show, including a full schedule of offerings, can be found at www.LeadingAgeRI.org. The website is also a great way to connect with LeadingAge RI and learn more about the services of its diverse membership.

"For LeadingAge RI, it is a privilege to represent nonprofit aging services providers, whose sole reason for existence always has been, and always will be, to provide the highest level of care possible and to promote the quality of life for people in our community," says Nyberg. "If you or someone you know is in need of long-term care, our members stand ready to provide quality and compassionate options—no one should ever hesitate to contact us."