

Chesapeake Place

Dedicated staff nurtures aging residents in lovely surroundings

BY LAURA MICHELLE BJORK

She just couldn't stay away. After retiring from a fulfilling career in health care, wife and mother Anne Mortenson planned to spend some much-needed down-time at home. Catch up on some shopping. Weed the garden. Read a book. Bake some cakes. Enjoy the fresh air without enduring the stress that comes from a busy professional life.

"I lasted two days," Anne, a Certified Senior Advisor, laughs. "That was it. Two days of retirement for me, and I was done."

For someone who had dedicated her entire career to the medical field and deserved a well-needed rest, retirement seemed the next logical step. Anne had worked in various capacities during the early years of her medical career. She spent the last 26 years of her career at Eastern Medical School.

"I thought, 'Well, it would be good to have a break. And the timing's about right,'" Anne smiles. "But I guess the timing wasn't right after all."

While Anne thought she needed a break, what she really needed was a new vision.

"I found that vision right here in Chesapeake," Anne, a native of Hampton Road, beams. "And I've never looked back."

Over a decade later, Anne is the Executive Director of Chesapeake Place, a premier assisted-living facility located on Volvo Parkway.

From the sun-filled, Southern-style porch, where a resident can enjoy the soft summer breeze, to the sparkle and gleam of the chandeliers inside, Chesapeake Place offers comfort and beauty to families with assisted living needs in Hampton Roads.

"We're a family here," Anne adds. "Families look out for each other, and we look out for each other. Always have."

Along with a dedicated staff and a mission to improve the quality of life for each and every resident, Anne has upheld a standard of care that has hall-marked Chesapeake Place since its inception 12 years ago.

"I've had to," Anne jokes with a twinkle. "I was the first employee they hired!"

Anne and her staff have nurtured the senior community at Chesapeake Place. Round-the-clock care is a given. Nutritional yet delectable meals are the order

of the day. And daily, planned social events are the highlight for many of the residents. Karaoke, bingo, shopping excursions, chapel services, arts and crafts, and bowling on the Wii are just a few of the favorite events on the venue at Chesapeake Place.

"Stars such as Elvis, Frank Sinatra, and Peggy Lee have even been known to stop by," Anne reports of some of the area's 'impersonator entertainers.' "We have a good time here!"

95-year-old resident Alberta Lambert, a former piano teacher, even performs mini piano concerts for her friends in the sitting area.

"Just a little something every now and then to liven things up," Miss Alberta smiles. "I love music. And I love it here. So I just put the two together sometimes. And out comes beautiful music."

When asked what she loves about her home in Chesapeake Place, Miss Alberta replies, "It's so clean here! So warm and friendly. And so quiet. When I want to be alone, I can find a nice, beautiful spot and just be by myself. I like that, you know. But other times, I want to be with my friends. And there are plenty of those here."

She is quick to add: "But my favorite thing here of all is Miss Anne."

Willie Alexander, the Personal Care Director, nods his agreement. "Everyone loves Miss Anne. She goes out of her way to make Chesapeake Place a real home."

Anne insists modestly: "We all go out of our way to do that."

For Willie, going out of his way means answering calls day and night. "I'm the problem-solving man," he laughs. "I handle anything that comes up. It doesn't make any difference what time of day it is. If they are hurting or upset, they call me. My people know they can get me any time they need me."

"I love these people. They are our history."

Yolanda Graham, CNA, has been with Anne since the beginning and handles the day-to-day routines characteristic of an assisted-living facility. From dining room details to personal care to planned activities, Yolanda dedicates herself to the complete care of each and every resident.

"You have to love what you do to be in this profession," Yolanda says warmly. "Otherwise, you're just wasting your time and theirs. I love what I do. This is my calling."

Throughout her career, Yolanda has been affiliated with many assisted-living facilities. But Chesapeake Place is the one she's dedicated herself to.

"Look around," Yolanda



Chesapeake Place Executive Director Anne Mortenson, CSA, with resident Alberta Lambert

motions with her hand at the beautifully painted, sandy-blue sitting area.

"Everything is so clean and cheerful. That's one of the things I love most. The staff here cares about the quality of life, and the families who bring their loved ones here care about them as well. We have a high percentage of family involvement. We love it when our families get involved. It truly makes it a big difference in the lives of our residents."

In addition to the assisted-living quarters, Chesapeake Place is also home to The Memory Center, a wing dedicated to families dealing with the onset and progression of Alzheimer's disease.

"The Memory Center is specially designed for the Alzheimer resident in mind," Anne explains. "It has extra-large hallways and a circular path, so our residents have plenty of room to walk around, which is something most of them love to do."

For families who have questions about Chesapeake Place or The Memory Center, daily tours are available. Anne enthusiastically encourages anyone to stop by and visit for a few minutes, interview the staff, enjoy the beauty of the grounds and interior, and experience the warmth and homey atmosphere.

"Nobody ever wants to leave their home," Anne acknowledges. "But sometimes in life you have to make a choice you never wanted to make. Our job is to make that choice as smooth as possible, to create a home that is warm and comfortable, with joy sprinkled in."

With a mission like that, who'd want to retire?

CHESAPEAKE PLACE
Assisted Living & Memory Care Community

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This beautiful courtyard provides a welcome place to relax