

FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS
WE ARE HERE TO HELP





MOVING MOM TO MEMORY CARE

Stephanie's Story

So many people have questions, doubts and worries when they start to consider whether it's the right time to move a parent out of their home and into a long-term care community of some kind. I was lucky to sit down with Stephanie to learn how she and her family handled her mother's need for additional care, ultimately resulting in a move to the Willows Memory Care Community at The Fountains at Hosanna in Lakeville.

Stephanie's dad passed away a quarter of a century ago. Her mother, living in a townhouse an hour away from the Twin Cities, had been slowly declining, physically and mentally. Stephanie and her brothers were aware of the decline, but they didn't realize until a few years ago that all those little signs added up to a need for a major move. Once they recognized this need, they decided to bring their mom along to an Open House at The Fountains at Hosanna, which offers Independent and Assisted Living as well as Memory Care. The siblings knew that getting their mom to accept a move could be an arduous process. Mom had always been fiercely independent and determined.

After celebrating Mom's birthday lunch together, they "spontaneously" decided to stop by The Fountains' Open House on a Saturday afternoon. Mom was uncharacteristically quiet during the obligatory tour. On the way out of the building, Stephanie commented on how nice it seemed there.

Mom wasted no time in retorting, "Fine! YOU live there!" Mom was scheduled to stay around for a few days before returning to her own home. During that stay, she fell in the bathtub, and it became abundantly clear to her three adult children that she really shouldn't be living alone anymore. Mom never went back to that townhouse.

A Power of Attorney was put in place in record time. Mom moved to Assisted Living at The Fountains at Hosanna within nine days of her initial visit there. It was an emotionally tough time for Stephanie and her brothers, even though they were sure this was the correct decision. That confidence helped through the harder moments, of which there were plenty, including the process of cleaning out Mom's townhouse and figuring out what to bring. The role reversal was disconcerting to Stephanie at first. "You feel like you're disobeying your parent when they are resisting, and YOU have to be the one making decisions and taking care of them now. But I realized that doing all of what we were having to do was simply a different way to 'honor, respect and obey' my mom, the way we had always been taught to do."



Stephanie and her brothers decided it would be best not to tell Mom in advance about the move. When her new place at The Fountains was all set up with her furniture and ready to be lived in, Stephanie took Mom out to lunch. Afterwards, they drove up into The Fountains parking lot. Mom recognized the place as familiar. "We've been here before!" she exclaimed. Stephanie announced, "Mom, we have a surprise for you." When Mom saw her name by the door of her new Assisted Living apartment, she was in shock. When she walked in and saw her furniture, she asked, accusingly, "Why are you doing this to me?" Stephanie was ready with well-thought out, simple responses, which she delivered without any defensiveness: "Mom, you need help. Here, we can spend more time with you and the grandkids can see you too." Mom wanted to know where they got that "new bedroom set". It was actually the same set she'd been using for the last 40 years.

That first night, Stephanie stayed overnight in Mom's new apartment. Disgruntled, Mom had gone to bed early. Stephanie was trying to sleep on the sofa but was herself unsettled and upset. She was still not yet asleep in the middle of the night when Mom got out of bed. Stephanie closed her eyes. Mom tiptoed over, covered her only daughter with a blanket and said softly, "I love you." Stephanie slept soundly after that, feeling that all would be well after all.

Mom calmed down pretty quickly after that first night. Before long, she was saying things like, "You know, when I found this place..."! A former stewardess, Mom was very congenial and loved the opportunity to talk and visit with different people. She took advantage of art classes and other activities. She thrived! She was doing so well, she actually moved out of Assisted Living and into Independent Living. But after about 2 years, it became clear that a move to Memory Care was in order.

"... I realized that doing all of what we were having to do was simply a different way to 'honor, respect and obey' my mom, the way we had always been taught to do."

Move-in to Memory Care day for Mom was set for March 15th of this year...pandemic and all. The family again (wisely) decided to let the move be a surprise to Mom. Stephanie's younger brother, Chris, kept Mom busy with her new grandson in the morning while Stephanie and her other brother and sister-in-law moved Mom's belongings into the Willows Memory Care. Just as Chris was walking Mom down the hall and into the Willows, Mom told Chris she needed to use the restroom. So, Chris led her straight to her new door and said, "Mom, this is your new room." Mom was (understandably) initially upset. Her family was of course upset that she was upset, but they also knew that this was the right thing, and they had faith that it would work out.

In fact, it didn't take long for Mom to settle into the Willows. A friend of Mom's also moved into Memory Care at around the same time, which was

helpful. "Mom never ONCE asked me about her old apartment after this move," says Stephanie. "In Memory Care, there is more of an established routine which Mom took to pretty quickly." At first, given COVID-19, in-person visits were out of the question, but window visits were possible and became the new normal, for a while. Now, Stephanie is an official "essential caregiver" for her mom and can visit up to 3 hours per day if she chooses to.

Stephanie says that her mom has adjusted extremely well by this point. "The restrictions imposed by the pandemic may actually been helpful for her adjustment at first." These days, Mom is calm, and Stephanie says she just hasn't seen the "buckiness", the resistance, anxiety and intense anger (veins popping out the side of her neck), that Mom used to sometimes show.





For herself, Stephanie has learned more about how to communicate effectively with her mom since she's moved to Memory Care. Stephanie admits she used to be more prone to quizzing or correcting her mom, in an effort to get her to identify people in photographs, for example, but thanks to family educational offerings at The Fountains, she's learned to interact more gently, to make things easier, to smooth the way for her mom by providing ideas or solutions, as opposed to pressing her with potentially anxiety-producing questions. Stephanie loves being a care partner for her mom, washing Mom's hair regularly and giving her a "beauty salon day" from time to time. She loves how friendly and kind the staff are at The Fountains at Hosanna. She is blown away by how upbeat, positive and patient the Activities professionals have been. She loves that church services are pumped into her mom's room from Hosanna, the adjoining church. Most of all, Stephanie loves seeing how happy and confident her mom has become since her move to the Willows Memory Care Community at The Fountains.

Stephanie's advice for any of you out there who may be contemplating a move to Memory Care for a loved one: "The worse the person's situation gets, the harder the adjustment will be for the person. The hardest part is simply STARTING the process."

Wise words indeed.



THE FOUNTAINS OF HOSANA: PROVIDING A Supportive Environment.

I think there are many wonderful lessons to be found in Stephanie's story. One thing that struck me immediately was how aligned, how supportive she and her two brothers were of one another along the way. They were all convinced that each move was the right thing to do. This doesn't always happen with families. It is so very helpful to all concerned when it does, most especially for that who is living with dementia and is needing a more supportive environment.

Thank you, Stephanie, for sharing your insights!
-Marysue Moses, Mmoses1@fairview.org

alzheimer's association®

The Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association offers many resources, including counseling for family members who may need support getting on the same page, when figuring out what is next for a family member.

Alzheimer's Association

7900 West 78th Street Suite 100,
Minneapolis, MN 55439

<https://www.alz.org/mnnd>

Phone: 952-830-0512

Helpline (24/7): 1-800-272-3900

