

IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

Innovative technology enhances lives at Seattle memory-care community

Every week at Quail Park Memory Care of West Seattle, residents might march with penguins, sit by the Eiffel Tower, pay a visit to their hometown, or just chill with a game of golf, all while sitting comfortably in a swivel chair.

These fantastic experiences are provided by HomeAgain VR, a Seattle-based virtual reality (VR) non-profit that uses technology to enhance the lives of people living with dementia.

"Bringing virtual reality into memory care has been heartwarming and eye-opening for me," says HomeAgain VR founder Katherine Mahon. "It's about immersing folks in experiences that evoke peace, excitement, or good memories. We see VR transform people's moods."

Mahon and a team of volunteers make weekly visits to Quail Park Memory Care of West Seattle, offering private sessions to residents, and she remembers one recent encounter. "There was a woman described by her caregiver as confused and agitated," Mahon recalls. "She spoke very little, didn't smile, and her head drooped to her chest. We were able to put a VR headset on her and suddenly she was in a new place where kittens were playing all around her. She lifted her head to look around and said, 'Cats! Kittens! Lots of them!' By the end of the session, she sat up straight with a big grin."

Research shows that VR can help treat chronic pain and anxiety. Because dementia symptoms may include stress, agitation, depression, and mood swings, VR seems an effective approach.



Caregivers and senior-living professionals have observed that residents using VR have better posture, improved verbal responses, and improved mood.

As part of Quail Park's Life Engagement program, VR sessions adapt to the abilities of each resident: They might just relax and watch the world go by or use simple controllers to interact with VR content.

In overseeing hundreds of sessions, Mahon has never observed anyone become disoriented or upset by the VR experience. "At some level, they seem to understand it's not real. People are curious though," she says, noting that safety is a priority. "People sit to avoid falls and a caregiver is always nearby. We always ask if they're OK, to see how they're doing."

Quail Park Memory Care of West Seattle offers another high-tech tool—a computer system called iN2L ("It's Never 2 Late"). User-friendly, with large icons on a touchscreen, it allows people to choose

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myriad experiences—games, art, exercise, spiritual explorations, and more. "It's also a way to stay connected with family," says iN2L founder Jack York, since residents can use Skype or put together a touch-screen puzzle with the grandkids.

Quail Park quickly embraced the innovative technology. "They've done a great job. Both staff and management get it," he adds.

5 TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Are you caring for someone with dementia? Here are five important things to remember:

- 1 Accept support.** Dementia care can be daunting. Never be afraid to ask for help.
- 2 Actively empathize.** Imagine if you suddenly found yourself disoriented, unsure of even your own identity.
- 3 Be realistic.** Most types of dementia are irreversible and progressive and will get worse over time. There will be good days and bad days. Success is assuring that the person you are caring for is as comfortable, happy, and safe as possible.
- 4 Dementia is more than memory loss.** While memory loss is often the most apparent symptom, neurological decline can lead to a host of other issues. In the later stages of dementia, people can become unable to do things like dress or toilet independently. They may become non-communicative and be unable to recognize loved ones.
- 5 Plan for the future.** Prepare for a time when your loved one may need professional memory care in a residential setting. By exploring your options early, you'll be able to identify the right setting for your loved one and make a move with the least amount of stress for you both.



Quail Park in West Seattle is purposefully built for enhanced, dignified memory care. Our community offers a secure home-like environment for your loved one. Call today to schedule a personalized tour and learn more about how we can help you provide a comfortable, happy, and safe life for a loved one living with dementia.

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