



Meet the parents: Legends in caring

TREAT THE residents exactly the same as if they were your own parents or grandparents.

That was the ethos which Tricia West instilled into her staff when she, along with husband Tony, set up her first nursing home back in the mid 1980s.

Much has changed since then. But while the home they launched in Dorrington has evolved and even changed location, that original ethos remains exactly the same.

If you've ever wondered about the history of The Uplands at Oxon, it might be best to start way back in the mid 1980s, more than 20 years before this building was even constructed.

That was when Mrs West, backed to the hilt by her husband, decided to realise a lifetime's dream and start a nursing home.

Mrs West, a trained nurse, and Mr West, who had been involved in a career in PR in the bus industry, decided to sell their country house hotel in Cornwall and set about finding a suitable home.

"We saw a for-sale advert for a residential home in Dorrington, just outside Shrewsbury," remembers Mr West.

"Even though, ideally, we would have liked to go back to the Worcester area where we had spent many happy years, our son, Andrew, was at university in Aberystwyth and our daughter Mandy was working in the bus industry in Birmingham so it seemed like a sensible location."

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Tony and Tricia West - it was Tricia's dream which set the wheels in motion for what was to become a jewel in the Shropshire care crown.

Our special floral project to remember a loved one



Find out on Page 4 how our gardener Brian Davis can help

“We went to have a look at it, Tricia could see the potential and we bought it in July 1985.

“At the time it was an 11-bed residential home but Tricia had plans to turn it into a nursing home. In September that year it was run as part nursing, part residential home, before in October 1986 it became fully nursing.”

The Wests added five more beds within the home before opening a 19-bed annexe in July 1989. For all of this time The Uplands in Dorrington was acquiring a reputation as a top quality nursing home.

Mrs West was very much a hands-on nurse overseeing the medical side of the operation while Mr West took care of the paperwork.

He became increasingly involved in the care sector and was one of the founders of Nursing Homes in Shropshire – a voluntary organisation set up to maintain and improve standards in the independent care sector – which went on to become Shropshire Partners in Care.

In 1994 Mrs West was forced to take early retirement due to ill health, but two years later the Wests bought another nursing home in Shropshire, this time in Newport, called The Rylands, which was a 50-bed, dual-registered home.

By this time there was another member of the family involved with the business.

“We got a phone call from Mandy, who was living in South Africa at the time, saying that she was coming back to England with the rest of her family and she asked whether we would like her to come into the business,” explains Mr West.

“We were absolutely delighted when Mandy joined us in January 1994. Mandy and I shared an office for quite a few years, and she took on the running of the business when I retired in December 2001.”

Mr and Mrs West are doubly proud. Their goal had been to have their own, well-run nursing home in which residents received the very best care. This they achieved.

Then there is the fact that Mandy – now of course managing director of Marches Care – brought The Uplands in Dorrington to this purpose-built site in Oxon and has been largely responsible for the success it is.

Mrs West says: “The Oxon home has always been Mandy’s baby, though she received great help from her husband Mark. It was always her project but she kindly involved us, kept us informed and allowed us to offer advice. It was an amazing move because all of the staff came over here as well as 24 patients – unfortunately Tony and I were ill at the time, needed nurse care, and so we made it 26!”

Anyone who saw the Dorrington home will testify that it is very different from The Uplands at Oxon but, as Mrs West explains, there are some very important similarities.

“Mandy saw that the ethos that we had at Dorrington worked,” she says. “We made no differentiation whatsoever between private and state-funded clients, and it didn’t matter how ill someone was, we were always willing to take them.

“We realised that the importance of having the best possible staff cannot be over estimated, something Mandy has certainly placed great emphasis on.

“And finally we knew that if we treated every client as though they were members of our own family then we would be providing the level of care that the residents deserve and the staff could be proud of.

“It makes us very happy and proud when we visit here and see that it is run to the standards we like to think we put in place.”

It’s musical merriment with Mal in our new ‘dance hall’



One of the most successful entertainments to come to The Uplands recently was the return of singer Mal Coot. Several residents from all over the home had a fantastic sing-along to some good old favourites – and some even took to the dance floor! This was the third time that Mal has been to visit and he has proved such a hit that we will do all we can to book him again. The event took place in the dining room . . . or should it now be called the dance hall?



Friends are on the case!

The Friends of the Uplands group has proved to be a huge success since it was formed by families of residents in the dementia units.

The group are now keen to extend the invitation to all families across The Uplands so that everyone can join in what has been a really well received initiative.

Meetings are on the first Thursday of every month at 2.30pm and anyone and everyone are welcome.

Also, the Friends of the Uplands are appealing to anyone who has good quality books which they are keen to get rid of to contact

the group and donate them to the steadily growing collection which is for sale.

There is a book case in the lounge which contains well over 100 books. The idea is to sell these and buy another bookcase with the proceeds.

● A representative from Caring with Confidence is being organised to come and talk to Friends of the Uplands about the programme.

Caring with Confidence is a free programme covering issues that carers may face, including stress, wellbeing and communicating with health professionals.

Our Uplands Employees of the Month

December

NAME: Tina Jones

AGE: 27

LIVES: Monkmoor, Shrewsbury

POSITION: RMN, Dorrington Unit

LIKES: Socialising (when I have the time!), athletics, music (apart from country & western), Sunday roast and also the food at The Uplands!

FAVOURITE FILM: My Sister's Keeper

BACKGROUND: Tina has been training in mental health at Staffordshire University for the last three years, having been a student at Shrewsbury's Radbrook College. "I worked at the hospital for a while and I questioned what type of nursing I wanted to do. I became particularly interested in Alzheimer's and how it affects people."

AND ANOTHER THING... This summer Tina is taking part in a charity sky dive, along with colleague Christina Griffiths. "I like a bit of a thrill and to get involved in things which are a little bit spontaneous!" says Tina.



Sunday roasts are one of the best things in life for our December choice Tina Jones

SHE SAYS: "The nurses here have been really supportive of me and it has been noticeable how caring they are of the residents. Coincidentally, I have worked with some of the residents here before I joined the team at The Uplands."

THEY SAY: "Tina has taken on the role really enthusiastically and always has a lively, sunny disposition. She has got to know the clients really well and treats them as individuals, which is lovely. She has integrated into the team fantastically and has shown a great deal of initiative."

Sue Williams, Dementia Manager

January

NAME: Anthony Archambault

AGE: 32

POSITION: RMN, Meole Unit

LIKES: Music (especially old school indie and dance), films, Prawn Madras – and, of course, girlfriend Helen!

FAVOURITE FILM: The Crow or Back to the Future

BACKGROUND: Anthony and Tina did the same three-year course in mental health at Staffordshire University. "I got really interested in psychology and behaviour, and I was inspired after going to an open day at the university. I realised then quite how blinkered I was and that I hadn't appreciated everything about mental health."

AND ANOTHER THING... Anthony is so keen on films that he actually makes them. He is a producer with Shrewsbury film group Mr Glass Productions, which was responsible for the feature film Waiting For Dawn.

HE SAYS: "I've been



A film producer in his spare time - that's January winner Anthony Archambault

given quite a lot of responsibility pretty quickly but I have loved it, especially now that I have got used to some of the routines. I have met my manager Jan Downes before when I was doing some work at Shelton Hospital and she has been a huge help to me."

THEY SAY: "Anthony has taken on the challenge with a lot of enthusiasm and has managed all the hurdles which he's come across very successfully. Like Tina, he has integrated into the team brilliantly and has done extremely well – he has a great future."

Sue Williams, Dementia Manager

Keen to keep on our toes with training

We are dedicated to encouraging our staff to improve their skills and we are delighted to say that there is an excellent take-up rate in terms of training opportunities.

Seven members of staff have now started their NVQs, and the percentage of Level II carers will shortly stand at about 85 per cent.

This figure is well over the minimum Government requirement of 50 per cent of staff working towards or having gained

NVQ Level II. While this is extremely encouraging, we don't want to rest on our laurels and are keen to push that figure up into the 90s and towards 100 per cent; that would be something to be very proud of.

We make no secret of the fact that we consider our staff here at The Uplands to be our most important asset, and it is in everyone's interests – not least the members of staff themselves – to give them the best training possible.

Kay's creative skills add ray of sunshine to home



Activities Co-ordinator Kay Farnsworth helps out with some special Mother's Day pictures.



Kay is delighted with the response to her programme of activities.

There has been a steady increase in the number of residents' activities taking place at The Uplands, and this is due to the excellent work Activities Co-ordinator Kay Farnsworth has been doing.

Residents are taking part in a wide variety of activities across the home and the feedback is very positive.

Kay said: "The activities programme has been steadily widening, and we are all looking forward to the warmer weather which will give us the opportunity to go outside.

"However, I would ask residents and their relatives to contact me if there are any activities which they would like to take part in which we don't hold already.

"Also, if any relatives have anything activity-related at home which they would be happy to donate to The Uplands – such as wool, board games or jigsaws – then that would be wonderful and very gratefully received."

Events over the next few weeks include:

March 30th – There will be a musical therapy session taking place in Cory Lounge, starting at 2pm. All residents, families and staff are invited to take part.

April 1st – Chaplain Rev Mary Fearnside will be holding an Easter service in Gough Lounge, starting at 2.30pm. Again, all are very welcome.

News in Brief

● We have got two new RMNs – Tina Jones on Dorrington and Anthony Archambault on Meole – both of whom are both doing extremely well and we would like to congratulate them. (See Employees of the Month on page 3 of the newsletter).

● The Gold Standards Framework is due to visit The Uplands to do some filming in the dementia units. This is for a training package being put together by the GSF who have actually visited us here before to catch us on camera.

● Clinical Lead Nurse Carey Bloomer and Carol Adams, Unit Manager, Gough, are doing a pilot project for end of life care with the GSF. This is a 16-week training programme.

● Residents and their families are very welcome to bring dogs or other sensible pets into The Uplands – as long as they are well behaved! The message comes from Carey Bloomer who herself brings in Wally, her little terrier, from time to time.

● Don't be alarmed if you hear snoring in the area around the photocopying machine just beyond reception but can't see anyone asleep. After weeks of confusion, most particularly from Office Administrator Jackie Hughes, it was realised that the photocopier itself was the culprit.

● At the end of March we will be employing our own cleaners again. For 12 months we used a specialist hygiene agency but will now take the service in house again after a detailed review.

A special reminder

This spring we are installing a memorial rose garden at The Uplands which we believe will be a beautiful and poignant way to remember some of those no longer with us.

There will be the opportunity for people to commemorate their loved ones with a rose plant in the garden which should be up and running in

time for the summer. We invite people to either supply their own rose plant or to give us the money and we will happily go and find a suitable one.

There are plenty of really good garden centres nearby which have an excellent selection of roses.

For further details please contact Carey Bloomer.



Our Uplands gardener Brian Davies