

LOHO adult family home: care with a difference



Claudia Bradley photo

The dining area.

By Claudia Bradley

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"Come to the Open House on Sunday, March 30 from 1 to 4 p.m. and see our gorgeous facility," said Lopez Housing Options (LOHO) Adult Family Home (AFH) Committee President Nancy Luebke. "There's nothing else like it in the State of Washington."

"This is not just a house converted to be an adult family home. This is a facility specifically designed for adults who need some assistance and can no longer live independently," says LOHO full-time caregiver Terri Fox.

"Our mission is to allow the elderly to remain a vital part of our community by continuing to live on the island," said Fox. "I embrace the philosophy of aging in place. Our goal is make people happy and comfortable and remain on Lopez Island."

The state-of-the-art building can house up to six residents. Each room is fitted with a bathroom, large closet, telephone and cable hook-ups and colorful decor. "Residents can have us furnish the rooms or bring familiar furnishings from home," said Fox. A walk-in tub and shower room are available for residents who need assistance bathing. A sunny common living room, dining area and fully stocked kitchen complete the ranch-style residence.

An additional touch of home will be a dog-in-residence, Felix, the nine-pound Pomeranian-Chihuahua mix. "She's a great therapy dog," says Fox.

Meals, laundry and assistance with the activities of daily living (ADLs), like medication scheduling, bathing and scheduling activities, will be offered to the residents. "We will cater to the residents' food preferences and ethnic persuasion," says Fox.

Residents must be ambulatory and have lived on Lopez Island for at least two years to qualify to move into the facility. Fire code laws require that the residents be able to get out of bed by themselves. "People who use wheelchairs and walkers just need to be able to transfer themselves to their mobility aids without assistance to live here," said Fox.

Fox comes to LOHO after over 30 years in health care. She has worked as a private caregiver and has spent many years focusing on the care of geriatric populations and those with Alzheimer's disease and older adults with developmental delays.

"My life's work is to take the best care I can of the elderly -- they are an undervalued resource in our society," said Fox. "They have so much information and love to give us. My mantra is 'Value our elders'."

Fox will live in the apartment upstairs. While she expects that the residents will not need 24-hour care, Fox will be on-call for emergencies. "As the residence fills up we will hire additional staff for relief work," said Fox.

A meeting room/sleeping room is available for family meetings and relief caregivers. A landscaped common area for family home residents and hamlet cottage residents will complement the property. Ground-breaking for The Gathering Place, an activity center, will begin later this spring.

The LOHO adult family home is a non-profit facility. Two-thirds of the building costs were funded by a USDA loan and one-third was privately raised. The LOHO residence is located off of Fisherman Bay Road between Weeks Rd. and Village Rd. in the heart of Lopez Village. The facility hopes to welcome its first resident sometime after April 24.