

A Look Inside the NEW Absolut Care of Aurora Park

As Western New York embraces the beauty of winter, we're reminded of the importance of new beginnings and each season's promise for renewal and growth.

We can liken this transition to that of East Aurora's hometown health care facility, Absolut Care of Aurora Park. Once a treasure of the community, new life was breathed into the bankrupt facility in March of 2020 when Edward Farbenblum and RCA Healthcare Management LLC assumed operations.

Almost immediately, the company appointed industry leader **Stacy Bastian**, RN, BSN, WCC, LNHA, to serve as administrator. With more than 20 years in health care, Bastian has "grown up" under the tutelage of the new ownership team and is well versed in their commitment to quality, best practices and a progressive culture. "I chose Aurora Park without



Stacy Bastian, RN, BSN, WCC, LNHA

hesitation in the backing of new management and ownership," she remarked. "Joining with the team and working hand-in-hand with the dedicated caregivers at Aurora Park has been outstanding."

Bastian began her career as a certified nursing assistant, CNA, and has held nearly

every nursing role within the long-term care setting including team leader, unit coordinator, clinical instructor, associate director of subacute services, assistant director of nursing, director of nursing and assistant administrator. She holds a bachelor of science in nursing from Trocaire College and received her certificate in nursing home administration from St. Joseph College of Maine.

Bastian joins Director of Nursing **Cyndee Foss**, RN, who has worked at Aurora Park for more than a decade. She, like Bastian began her career as a certified nursing assistant and felt her calling to become a caregiver at a very young age. "I



Cyndee Foss, RN

started in long-term care at 16 in the dietary department," Foss remarked. "At 22, I became a CNA, and when a fellow nurse wouldn't listen to my concerns about a patient who I was sure had a problem, it inspired me to become a nurse who listens to input from the aides." Her experience in health care is expansive and includes roles as director of restorative nursing, resident care coordinator, nurse aide training program coordinator, primary instructor, education director and assistant director of nursing.



Training in kitchen, bedroom and bathroom settings prepares rehab patients for a safe return into the community

She earned her degree from Genesee Community College.

Both women are firm believers that starting their careers as certified nursing assistants provided them with an intimate understanding of what it takes to be a compassionate, committed caregiver; and they're not alone in their beliefs. This sentiment is echoed by Aurora Park's new Medical Director, **Dr. Paul Shields** of Great Lakes Health System and General Physician PC, who got his start as a patient care aide at a traumatic brain injury facility. "Dr. Shields' breadth of clinical knowledge and personal experience in a skilled nursing setting makes him a valuable asset to our facility," Foss remarked.

Dr. Shields holds degrees from Gannon University and Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. He's affiliated with the American Osteopathic Board of Family Physicians, American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians, American Osteopathic Association, New York Medical Society and Pennsylvania Osteopathic Medical Association.

In addition, he participates on the COVID task force with Kaleida Health to enhance the methodology and treatment related to the COVID-19 virus and also serves as the Medical Director of the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) of Western New York.

One of his primary focuses at Aurora Park is to improve and optimize the patient experience. He achieves this through on-site, 7 day-per-week accessibility of his highly skilled team of providers. "Dr. Shields' professionalism, leadership and demeanor with the residents is a perfect fit for Aurora Park," Bastian remarked. "He and his team will play a vital role in helping us transition into a five-star provider."

Essential to Aurora Park's rebirth are the renovations that have taken place creating a modern and technologically advanced environment for staff and residents. One of the most significant improvements is a

3,100-square-foot therapy gym designed to promote recovery and healing in a comfortable and home-like environment. With unique training areas in kitchen, bedroom and bathroom settings, rehab patients work with a team of specialists to regain the skills and stamina necessary to return back into the community safely and independently. This team of rehabilitation experts includes physical, occupational and speech therapists and support staff who treat more than 600 patients each year. "Our approach to care is discovering what motivates our patients," stated Director of Therapy Lorrie Mueller, who has been in the industry for more than 20 years. "We had a stroke patient who couldn't speak or move his right side. Our approach to care included incorporating his wife into his therapy treatments. After 7 months, he had regained almost all of his motor skills and was able to speak again. He returned home happier and healthier."

What's even more impressive is the relationships that Mueller and the therapy team form with each resident. In this case, Mueller learned that the husband's favorite meal was spaghetti and meatballs so she made it for him on her own time. "He's Italian so I was worried that he would want an authentic meal; but turns out, he liked it!"

Whether it's including the spouse in a therapy regimen or simply understanding important elements about a person's life, that's what sets Aurora Park's therapy team apart and results in a better experience for each patient. "Impacting someone's life in that way is so rewarding," Mueller remarked.

In addition to the upgrades to the facility and technology, in 2020 Aurora Park became one of the only facilities in the southtowns to offer individualized **in-house dialysis services** to improve the health and wellness of its patients. The program involves a 5-day gentle dialysis protocol which differs from the typical 3-day schedule that many treatment centers offer. This unique approach provides greater flexibility and

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Trained rehabilitation professionals provide physical, occupational and speech therapies to more than 600 patients each year



Aurora Park's caregivers are hand-selected for their compassion and commitment to excellence

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more time for therapy, activities and rest. Most importantly, by receiving services in-house, patients never have to leave the comfort of the facility for treatment. Once they're ready for discharge, the team at Aurora Park coordinates the transition back to their previous dialysis center.

In addition, Aurora Park also features a dedicated **memory care unit** for those with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. "Our empathetic caregivers have been hand-selected for their ability to deliver compassionate care while fostering self-esteem, dignity and security for each of our residents," Foss stated. "Our safe, secured memory care unit incorporates the latest research and design elements to meet the needs of our residents, while structured programming keeps them active and engaged. We focus on providing emotional and therapeutic care to maintain the existing strengths and abilities of each person. Special importance is placed on recognizing individuality and contributing to a resident's sense of self-worth. This is achieved by incorporating tasks and activities that were part of their regular everyday routines."

The unit features visual cues, secured entrances and exits, specialized lighting, calming colors and more. Above all, the employees on the unit are seasoned professionals who possess extensive experience in caring for those with memory impairments. "All of our caregivers receive intensive dementia-specific training,

followed by educational updates throughout the year," Foss remarked.

In 2018, Aurora Park entered into a partnership with **Hospice Buffalo** to provide specialized services for residents with end-of-life illnesses and support for their family members. The unit was named after Miss Frances A. Little, an East Aurora resident who volunteered as an American Red Cross nurse during World War I.

In addition to robust specialty and rehab programs which cater to patients for short-term stays, Aurora Park offers **skilled nursing services** for individuals requiring 24-hour care. Residents receive comprehensive treatment from a full team of health care providers, including physicians, nurses, certified nursing assistants, therapists, nutritionists and more. The team focuses on providing high quality hands-on care and assistance with activities of daily living. A special focus is given to retaining residents' overall function while ensuring dignity and quality of life.

Engaging and worthwhile activity programs are also an important part of the culture at Aurora Park. Programs include daily activities, one-on-one sessions, spiritual programs, trips and outings, holiday and themed dinners, family-focused events and more. "Activities are an essential part in keeping our residents happy and healthy," Bastian remarked. "Our staff takes time to understand each resident's history and plans programs that will be stimulating and enjoyable."

"Over the last year, our world has faced unique challenges forcing all of us to be innovative and persistent in the face of a global pandemic," Bastian stated. "One of the most important things that I want to emphasize is that the health and safety of our residents and staff is of paramount importance. We are continuing to follow stringent sanitation protocols and work with families to keep them connected to their loved ones during this unprecedented time."

One of the ways Bastian and her team is making this happen is by hosting **town hall-**

style Zoom meetings for family and community members. "It's unfortunate, but in the past, people were let down by the things that happened here," she remarked. "We're using the town hall meetings as a way to create transparent channels of communication to let family and community members know this is a new Aurora Park. This community deserves a facility that works in collaboration with the town to offer the high-quality care that everyone deserves."

This commitment to superior care isn't just talk. In the last 6 months, Aurora Park has received three perfect infection control surveys from the Department of Health. Likewise, it's rated with four stars in quality measures by the federal government. "This is an important rating because it places quantifiable value on some of the most important aspects of care including pressure ulcers, falls, rehospitalization rates and more," Bastian stated. "We're moving forward in a manner that will allow us to attain the overall five-star rating that I know is achievable in the hands of our competent

caregivers and new ownership."

"Aurora Park isn't just a place for progressive care, it's also a **fantastic organization to work for**," she stated. "With the team expanding under the new ownership, opportunities exist in nearly all departments for nursing, certified nursing assistants, dietary, activities, housekeeping and maintenance. We're happy to offer competitive sign-on bonuses, paid CNA training, generous time-off packages, health, dental and more." Those who are interested can apply online at www.absolutcare.com/careers or text (716) 716-221-0764 to apply instantly.

Inclusive of Aurora Park, RCA Management LLC assumed operations of five other Absolut Care facilities including Orchard Brooke Assisted Living in Orchard Park, Absolut Care of Gasport in Gasport, Absolut Care of Westfield in Westfield, Absolut Care of Three Rivers in Painted Post near Corning, NY and the five-star rated Absolut Care of Allegany in Allegany.

For more information, visit www.AbsolutCare.com.



A newly remodeled therapy gym features the latest technology in a comfortable, modern environment