Changing the culture of care

By Karen Haynes  
Rep/Ex Staff

On July 22, Copper Sky Lodge in Spruce Grove became the first supported living facility in Canada to partner with Dementia Care Matters as a Butterfly Care Home.

Dementia Care Matters, founded by Dr. David Sheard (from the U.K.), is an organization that strives to change the culture of care for residents with dementia. The goal is to no longer see residents as a series of symptoms but to provide “emotion-based” care, recognizing that feelings matter most.

“Dementia care can be so different,” Sheard said. “People living with dementia come alive again. So they may sit and eat meals to residents with hugs. We are going to change the culture of care for residents with dementia but we can fix our approach. (We need to) join people in their reality, in their world and not challenge their ‘truth.’ Instead, accepting people in their reality and learning to love people as they are, works,” Sheard said.

“When you believe this, people with dementia come alive again. So called ‘expressive behaviours’ disappear and although their condition is degenerative, it is still possible to reach the spirit inside someone.”

Currently, there are two cottages for special dementia care that house a combined 27 people at Copper Sky Lodge. Staff will first implement the Butterfly model here.

Nicole Gaudet, vice-president of Choices in Community Living, expects the program to bring all kinds of changes to the lodge.

“The spaces are going to change. We are going to create an even more lively environment with stimulating and interactive designs to keep people engaged,” she said, adding that staff will begin to provide more one-on-one, personal, empathetic and responsive care.

“We unfortunately can’t fix dementia but we can fix our approach.”

— Dr. David Sheard on the Butterfly Care Home model

“People may be freely able to go outside into safe enclosed areas without needing doors unlocked or having to be accompanied. One goal will be for people with dementia to regularly do domestic activities throughout the day.

The Butterfly model shifts meals from being a chore to a social experience by providing meal choice at the time of meal, rather than in advance.

And, during mealtime, staff will work to keep conversations going using objects, items in their pockets and conversation cards on the tables.

For Gaudet, this culture change is a welcomed initiative at Copper Sky Lodge that will hopefully spur other facilities to explore emotion-based care for people with dementia.

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Copper Sky lodge offers a new approach to caring for those with dementia.

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