

# KENDALL GAZETTE

## Ask Helen



### You're Not In It Alone - Acclimating To A Senior Community Can Be A Team Effort

BY HELEN SHAHAM

**Q.** *I'm in my mid 80's and have been living alone since my wife passed away a few years ago. I know senior living communities offer many opportunities for social interaction but I also know that friendships aren't developed overnight. It's been years since I've had to make new friends. Will someone help me to get acclimated to my new home?*

**A.** I understand that it's difficult being the new kid on the block. Although senior living communities schedule various activities throughout the day for residents to interact, attending the events for the first time can be a bit overwhelming.

You're right, friendships aren't developed overnight. However, both employees and residents are empathetic to your situation and work hard to make sure you feel welcomed.

At The Palace, we roll out the red carpet prior to your actual move-in date. As a prospective resident, we open the doors of our community and welcome you to participate in any number of weekly events, seminars and lectures. Usually by the time you move into your apartment, you've met several other residents on more than one occasion.

If a resident still feels a little hesitant, our staff steps in to ensure a smooth

transition. We know that residents aren't simply renting an apartment; they desire the lifestyle and security offered by our communities.

We have implemented several new programs to help them adapt and get acclimated to their new homes. Once new residents arrive at the community, they meet with our Guest Relations Director. He then creates a "Promise List", which includes the resident's bio and photo and sends it to the other managers. Within 24 hours of receiving the "Promise List", the team must personally introduce themselves to the resident and fulfill any requests he or she may have concerning their new home.

"This one-on-one relationship is very beneficial to newcomers," said Spring Strong, executive director of company's independent living community, The Palace Suites. "Our employees are better able to introduce a new resident to others who share their interests."

Additionally, Strong hosts an "Executive Director Luncheon" to welcome new residents. Here, the residents can interact with others who may be facing the same anxieties. They also share information about on their hometown, hobbies and past careers.

The managers also attend and are able to learn these interesting insights. The Palace team takes pride in their ability to know each resident personally. It's not uncommon to see staff and residents sharing family photos or discussing an upcoming milestone.

For those residents still having difficulty coming out of their shells, the "Adoptive Manager" program offers yet another way to get them acclimated to their new home. Each new resident is "adopted" by a member of the management team for two weeks following their arrival at the community.

Each day, the manager visits with the resident. According to Strong, the managers are required to report back

to the team on how well the resident is transitioning to the community.

"The manager cannot simply indicate that a resident is 'doing well'," emphasized Strong. "Details are essential. We like to know if the resident has participated in one of our many activities or if he or she has met a new friend."

The Palace has received tremendous positive feedback from new residents. They praise the efforts of Strong and her team in assisting them during the initial move. Existing residents have also applauded the steps being taken by staff and have committed themselves to helping their newest neighbors too.

Moving can be stressful for even the most adventurous person. You wonder how you'll fit in and if the neighbors will like you. Just be yourself, relax and enjoy each new experience. Don't worry, if your home is anything like The Palace, there won't be only someone to help you get acclimated to the community, there'll be an entire team (plus residents) ready to show you the ropes!

*Helen Shaham and her husband Jacob have been operating retirement communities for nearly 30 years. The Palace Suites in Kendall is a luxury Independent Living Community for active seniors. In addition, The Palace at Kendall campus is home to two Assisted Living Residences and a Nursing & Rehab Center. They also operate The Palace Gardens Assisted Living Community in Homestead, Homestead Manor Nursing Home and The Palace @ Home, a Medicare Certified Home Health Agency. Their two newest projects are The Palace at Weston – luxury living for those 55 and over, and The Palace Tel-Aviv, a continuing care retirement community in Israel. They have two communities under development – The Palace at Weston Senior Living and The Palace at Coral Gables. More information can be found on the company website, [www.thepalace.org](http://www.thepalace.org) or by calling 305-270-7000.*