



November 2021 Good News Story

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A conversation with Karen Fitzgerald, General Manager at [Aster Gardens](#) in Sherwood Park



General Manager Karen Fitzgerald introduces Aster Gardens in a [one-minute video](#).

In addition to being new, what makes Aster Gardens different from other facilities?

I think the language that is used. We have care champions. We do not use the phrase, “Can we...?” or, “Allowed to...?” When residents or staff ask, our response is, “Do you want to?” If residents want to, our thought is, “Ok how do we make this happen?” Residents guide as much of the decision making as possible.

What are the various care options available at Aster Gardens?

Aster Gardens is run by ‘Optima Living’ with facilities in Alberta and British Columbia. At Aster Gardens we offer several care options: Independent Living, Assisted and Supportive Living, Short Term Stays and Memory Care, which is founded on Optima Living Brain Health Program.



Aster Gardens was constructed in the middle of the pandemic. What were some of the lessons learned about construction projects during a global pandemic?

There were many. One of the biggest was ensuring social distancing and flow of work traffic. We were able to use our parking garage to create spaces for each of the trades. The trades also took lunch breaks at different times so they were not all in the parking garage at the same time.

Aster Gardens has used a number of technologies to create a safe and healthy environment for residents during the pandemic. Can you speak to what those are?

First, since we were completing construction during the pandemic, we needed to have a safe supply of air. The only way to accomplish that was to ensure that each suite had their own air supply. Second, when an individual first enters the facility, they are greeted by our COVID scanner. This scanner completes a full body scan of individuals, scanning for several different symptoms such as fever and nasal congestion. The scanner then gives individuals a green or red light. If you get a red light, you cannot enter the building. Finally, some of our residents do not receive nursing care, so we have an automated thermometer where they can come and have their temperature taken.

In addition to keeping residents protected from COVID-19, technology has allowed you to keep residents safe. Can you tell us more about that?

There are a variety of ways we've used technology. First, resident's need to feel that they are safe in their new home. This maybe their first experience in a congregated living setting so they may feel hesitant about the safety of their belongings if they are out. Therefore, we use an access control system which means there are no keys for resident suites. The system has individual electronic markings so, if there are any concerns about entrance to a resident's suite the system can see who has entered a resident's room. To enhance making residents feel safe in their rooms the access control system allows staff the ability to unlock the suite's deadbolt in an emergency, so residents can lock their deadbolt at night and still feel that help can get to them if needed. Second, residents' suites are equipped with a camera doorbell system. This way, they can see who is at their door, regardless of their height. Third, toilet seats are equipped with LED lights so the seat can glow at night, the residents can see where the toilet is, which helps prevent falls. Fourth, Memory Care units are equipped with motion sensor cameras. It alerts nursing staff to movement in a resident's room, so they can prevent falls. This is used instead of fall mats and bed alarms, which can contribute to falls. Finally, the whole facility is equipped with security cameras inside. This is used to spot a situation that has the potential to escalate. Staff can then intervene, already knowledgeable about the situation.

Are you looking at any other technology options in the future?

Yes, we are currently looking at implementing QR codes for contractors who come on site. When contractors scan a QR codes, it brings them through an orientation, they sign in and out, and are able to request any other pertinent information if needed. It, of course, also provides documentation of the contractor's visit.