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A Growing Community

A \$24 million expansion and renovation embodies **Dunwoody Village's** commitment to offering residents first-class amenities, facilities, and programming.

BY MATT COSENTINO

For nearly half a century, Dunwoody Village in Newtown Square has established itself as one of the premier continuing care retirement communities in the region, equally admired for its healthcare services as well as the amenities and programming it offers to enrich residents' daily lives. Rather than rest on that past success, however, the organization has made it a point to constantly look for ways to improve upon its offerings.

The latest example of that commitment is Dunwoody Village's \$24 million renovation of its community center, which was designed to not only reimagine an older space but also to expand on the already remarkable list of amenities and activities available. Phase one of the project was recently completed, doubling the size of the building and adding 15,000 square feet of space to each of its two levels.

"The footprint that was here was from when it was originally built in the 1970s," says Monica Knauss, Dunwoody's community relations coordinator. "Subsequently, we've added more residential homes, but we had never increased the size of the community center. We now have a size that suits our population, along with the fresh look that we needed. It's been so exciting over the past two months to see the residents utilizing these new spaces."

A ribbon-cutting for the new community center was held in late April, much to the delight of residents and staff members who had been eagerly awaiting its opening. The crown jewel is perhaps the 200-seat auditorium, which will be the site for regular movie screenings, guest speakers, musical acts, and other performances.

"Recently, a group of about a dozen residents performed several one-act plays," Knauss adds. "Much of our programming is planned by our residents. There are various committees that coordinate the live performances, and sometimes we have livestreamed programs from the Berlin Philharmonic or The Met [in New York City]. The night of our grand opening, we had a 19-piece band. As we opened the doors, they were playing big band-era music. We rented a dance floor for the evening. It was a lot of fun."

Residents were also involved in the design process of the community center, including giving input on everything from color schemes to the flooring to the style of chairs. Their voices are valued and heard because, after all, it is an extension of their home and meant to enhance their experience and improve their quality of life.

Residents who asked for more dining options could not be happier with the results. The community center now features a bistro for casual fare, a formal dining room with wait service, and a private room for residents having a





➔ Dunwoody Village

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tables, and additional meeting space. Clearly, the finished product will have something for everyone, and residents can stay occupied for a majority of the day if they choose. Dunwoody's picturesque, 83-acre campus also has two miles of walking trails, and a resident wildlife committee that maintains the trails, leads walks, and provides educational talks about Dunwoody's flora and fauna.

That kind of camaraderie has defined Dunwoody for decades. Personal growth, friendship, and independence have been cornerstones of "the Dunwoody experience" since the very beginning.

"Dunwoody is known for its health care, and ultimately that's why people choose our community, for the continuum of care that we provide," Knauss says. "But we encourage people to come sooner rather than later, to enjoy all the amenities that we have. Providing a lifestyle of wellness helps to improve their health and keep them active and enjoying life."

She adds, "I tell people that they don't leave their gifts and talents at the door when they come to Dunwoody; they bring them with them. Our residents are still active, engaged, and leading a lot of the activities and programming that happens here." ■

family gathering. When the second phase of the expansion is complete this fall, there will also be a lounge with a pub-style menu and a grab-and-go section with pre-packaged items. As always, Dunwoody offers seasonal entrées made with locally sourced ingredients, and the in-house chef strives to bring classic familiar recipes to a new level of flavor while emphasizing a healthier approach.

Other aspects of the community center include a new fitness center with a wide range of top-of-the-line equipment and daily classes designed to improve balance, build strength, and finetune cardiovascular health; a library with more than 7,000 books and a digital, easy-to-search catalog; and a unisex salon for hair styling, cuts, and manicures.

The expanded center also has a significantly larger arts-and-crafts studio.

"There are regularly scheduled classes; there's space for painting and other artistic endeavors," Knauss says of the arts-and-crafts space. "There's a group that meets on Friday afternoons for several types of stitching, whether it's knitting or crocheting or various types of needlework. They have a kiln so there's an opportunity for pottery. Alongside the arts-and-crafts studio is a well-supplied and stocked woodshop. No matter their artistic skill level, there's something for everyone."

In addition to the lounge, the second phase of the project will include a renovated lobby, an updated game room with billiards



Select photographs by Jody Robinson and Dennis Degnan