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IntegraCare communities **Exton Senior Living** and **Glen Mills Senior Living** foster a culture of care designed to improve life for seniors, their families, and team members alike.

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'Care Is at the Heart of What We Do'

IntegraCare communities **Exton Senior Living** and **Glen Mills Senior Living** foster a culture of care designed to improve life for seniors, their families, and team members alike.

by **BILL DONAHUE** | photos by **JODY ROBINSON**

arry Rouvelas believes that all things are possible with the right team in place. He also believes he *has* the right team in place, though he's always looking for new talent devoted to his company's noble mission and mindset: expertly caring for and enriching the lives of seniors.

Rouvelas is the CEO of IntegraCare, which operates 18 senior living communities in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, 13 of which are in the Keystone State. He describes each IntegraCare community as "a great place to live because it's a great place to work." He's not the only one who thinks so. In 2023, 15 of IntegraCare's 18 communities earned Great Place to Work certification by World's Best Workplaces.

"Our mission is to create a culture of care that improves life for our seniors, their families, and our team members," Rouvelas says. "I see my job as pointing people in the

right direction to serve others, clearing distractions out of the way, and giving them the tools and training they need to do their jobs well. I'm grateful to be in this position, because I get to connect people with each other and lead a company that makes a real difference in people's lives."

IntegraCare's culture of self-improvement extends far beyond the team members who deliver residents' care. As an example, Rouvelas cites the campuses of two communities in the Philadelphia market—Exton Senior Living and Glen Mills Senior Living—that have benefited from a recent \$3 million investment in upgrades and renovations.

Casey Counsellor, executive operations officer of Exton Senior Living, still recalls the first time he walked into the building for his interview. He felt genuinely welcomed by the charming atmosphere, though he also remembers the surroundings being a bit "tired." The community has since become "brighter, fresher, and better flowing," thanks to a campuswide transformation. In addition to an updated private dining room, activity room, and library, Exton Senior Living now has a new movie theater, a wellness center, and ample space for in-house rehabilitation. It even expanded its outdoor areas, such as a walking path with a pergola.

"This is home to our residents, and we make it feel like home," says Counsellor, a hospitality veteran who worked as a golf professional before transitioning to senior living. "Senior living is like a country club without the golf course; the only difference is the care component."

Exton Senior Living, which provides personal care, memory care, and respite care, recently earned two prestigious accolades: a "Best Assisted Living" award from *U.S. News & World Report*, and Great Place to Work certification. Counsellor credits the community's staff, many of whom have been working there for several years.

"Our residents are always telling us our staff is warm, friendly, and always smiling," he adds. "We get to know their needs, and in some cases we're anticipating their needs in advance. When a resident asks us for something, the answer is always yes; it's just a matter of figuring out how to get there."



Exton Senior Living EOO Casey Counsellor takes time to connect with a resident.



Glen Mills EOO Michele Adams and a resident read a book together.

Counsellor cites the company's Motivational Advancement Program (MAP), which is designed to help any full- or part-time team member "invest in their future" by learning new skills, taking on more responsibility, and earning higher wages. For example, someone who was hired as a cook could learn how to plan menus and place orders, prepare for health inspections, and become a capable leader through one-on-one mentoring, peer support, and other essential training.

Michele Adams became executive operations officer of Glen Mills Senior Living in March 2022. Caring for seniors has been her calling for nearly 30 years. Trained as a licensed nurse, Adams changed her trajectory when she applied for a nursing job at a continuing care retirement community; instead, she was hired for an administrative job. Having honed her skills for decades at senior living communities throughout the Philadelphia area, she felt drawn to IntegraCare's mission.

"As EOO, my job is to make sure residents have what they need," she says. "When someone moves in here and I get to meet their family, they trust me to put their loved one under my care. I'm going to do everything possible to make sure they have the care they need. How do you want someone to take care of your mother or father?"

Glen Mills Senior Living offers personal care, respite care, and, as of later this year, memory care. Much like its counterpart in Exton, the Glen Mills campus has been in a state of welcome renewal. So far, renovations and upgrades have included an expanded Life Bridges program for residents in need of extensive hands-on care, a new library and beauty salon, and a revamped lobby. Behind-the-scenes improvements include an expanded breakroom for team members, a new roof, a new call-bell system, and an updated HVAC system. Additional enhancements are underway.

While the physical plant may evolve over time, Adams says there's one thing that will always stay the same: the community's unflinching commitment to around-the-clock care. She credits such devotion to shrewd hiring and a resident-first culture.

"When we hire, we look for someone who is compassionate and empathetic, and who believes this is what they have been called to do," she says, noting the community's recent Great Place to Work honors. "We can teach anyone how to do a job, but we can't teach the attitude of 'senior care is what I need to do.' No one here says, 'It's not my job.' Whatever we need to do to take care of our residents, that's what we're going to do."

Rouvelas encourages both prospective residents and potential team members with big hearts to visit the communities.

"If a young person wants to go into a growing field with a strong mission, we



IntegraCare CEO Larry Rouvelas

"A beautiful building is nice, but it's more important to have great care," he says. "If you're moving from a single family home into senior housing because you need personal care—help getting dressed, taking medications, things like that—you're better off moving to a community that *specializes* in personal care."

WHERE TO BEGIN

For older adults and their families who are beginning to think about making the transition to a senior living community, where should they begin? Larry Rouvelas, the CEO of IntegraCare, has a few ideas.

"The first question someone needs to answer is if they need senior housing at all," he says. "Should I stay in my home? Should I move to a regular apartment instead? If senior housing does make sense, google 'senior housing near me' and check out a bunch of websites. If you see something you like, get in touch with the communities directly. If you have a complicated situation, you can hire someone to help you navigate it. Google 'Aging Life Care Association.'"

When it comes time to visit a community, he advises meeting with on-site managers, not just the salesperson, and inquiring about the tenure of the management and staff. Have lunch there and observe the resident-staff interactions.

encourage you to go into senior housing," he says. "If a retiree wants to work part-time at a meaningful job, we encourage you to go into senior housing. If a nurse wants to build long-term relationships with patients, I encourage you to look at senior housing.

"Care is at the heart of what we do," he continues. "Our goal is to provide great care in an attractive environment at a reasonable price. We want our residents to be comfortable and their families to have peace of mind, and we have many initiatives in place at our communities to make sure we're able to do all those things consistently." ■



Exton Senior Living

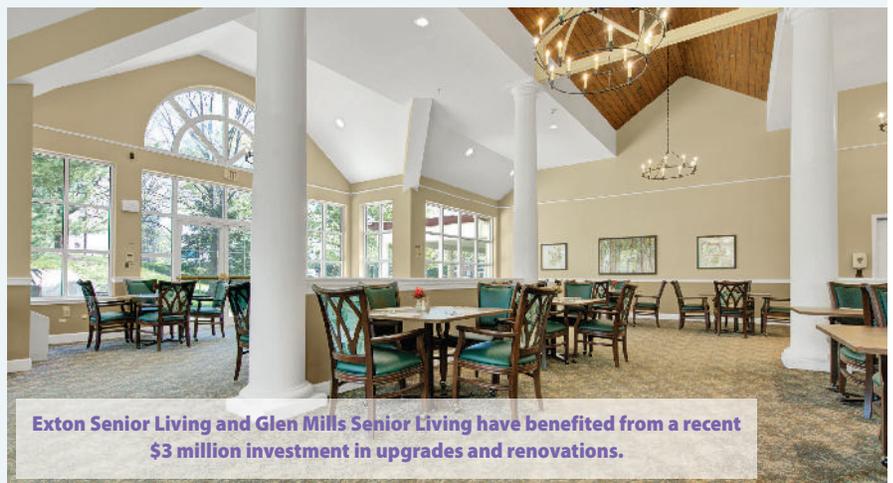
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Exton Senior Living and Glen Mills Senior Living have benefited from a recent \$3 million investment in upgrades and renovations.

