

# Making the Years Count: Redeemer Health and Rehab/Elim Care, Empira, and Dept. of Human Services Help Older Adults Tackle Unfinished Business

by Jenna Zak

How can we make our lives count — especially if we know there may be only two or three years left? While hospice typically addresses end of life care for people facing the last six months, most of us seldom think about how we want to experience the last few years.

The ResoLute Program at Elim Care's Redeemer Health Care Center was created to help those who want to discover and reconcile priorities, ideas and wishes—and celebrate their lives while completing unfinished business. The program's name is an acronym that stands for Resident Empowered Solutions on Living until the End. It is facilitated by Elim Care Quality in Living Specialist Melinda Anderson.

"There is a tremendous need for people entering their twilight years, who are experiencing declines, to identify what is most important to them," says Anderson. "It may be a creative project, time with grandchildren, writing a family history or a hundred other things."

Individuals facing the end of their lives are often overwhelmed by dealing with an illness—and families are overwhelmed too. "A cardiologist may be talking with someone about their heart, or another doctor may talk about kidneys—but what about the emotional or spiritual parts of our lives? Those are important too, and we need to think about them as much as we think about physical matters," Anderson adds.

An interdisciplinary team at Redeemer assists Anderson so she can identify residents who are declining and who may benefit from this program. Anderson then works with each resident to help them discover what matters most to them and their loved ones. A care plan is created as a framework in which residents can then achieve success with their projects, wishes or endeavors. "This process is a privilege and a calling," Anderson explains. "My goal is to spend time with people facing the end of life. I want to get to know them and learn what matters most to them now and in the future."

The program is part of a series of quality improvement initiatives funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). Elim Care, in partnership with

Empira, seeks to inspire, challenge, and strengthen the aging services industry through practical application of evidence-based research. The organizations have historically conducted numerous initiatives. Some include reduction of falls and enhanced balance, improved sleep patterns, and life enrichment for those residents with sundowning issues.

"We want to see people in health care centers celebrating life and living fully, despite whatever challenges they are facing," says Anderson. "When residents tell us what matters most to them, we do everything we can to individualize and structure life to reflect those priorities. We ask residents about what they consider their greatest accomplishment to

be, and how they want to be remembered. Then we help them achieve whatever goals they have."

For more information or to interview a participant or Quality in Living Specialist Melinda Anderson, please call Jenna at 651-529-0090.

## About Elim Care

Elim Care, Inc. is a Minnesota-based ministry founded in 1927 to provide quality, compassionate, and innovative senior housing and healthcare in the spirit of Christ's love.

Elim Care is now affiliated with Minnesota-based eldercare provider Augustana Care, which fosters fullness of life for older adults through housing, health care and community-based services.