Imagine riding in an elevator, the doors open and you step into a vibrant village where people are walking in the park, visiting the salon or barber shop, and you truly feel like you’re still outdoors. The 11th floor at The Cunningham, Loretto’s residential floor for people with advanced-stage dementia, is this place.

To incorporate some of the latest innovations in dementia care, Loretto completely overhauled rooms, hallways, common areas and more, to create a living environment that optimizes the quality of life for these residents. The renovation, which took three months to complete, is part of the first phase of Loretto’s RememberMe $5 million capital campaign announced in 2018.

“The revived space at The Cunningham is the only one of its kind in our region. We are very proud of the space we have created for our most acute memory care residents and their loved ones,” said Kim Townsend, President and CEO of Loretto. “The renovation allows residents to receive the best in dementia and Alzheimer’s care while living as independently as possible and allows residents and their families to truly live in the moment.”

The once traditionally-designed clinical space has been transformed into a neighborhood-like setting focused on providing excellent care while allowing residents to maintain a sense of freedom in a safe environment. The space incorporates innovative technologies and design representing a cutting-edge approach to memory care including:

- Special flooring that mitigates fall risk and is gentle on joints, wayfinding cues to make walking more enjoyable and allowing residents a level of independence
- Elevators and doors covered with images of landscapes and familiar home scenes to trigger memories, redirect residents and keep them safe
- Softer lighting, upgraded scent system and calming colors to address sensory needs
- A neighborhood-feel complete with gathering areas that reflect park settings and a working salon/barber shop,
- Upgraded window treatments to optimize use of natural light
- New technology—headphones and computers to provide various options for residents to benefit from calming music and interactive games, and mechanized dogs and cats that meow, stretch and bark, all help to stimulate memory and reduce agitation.
“The space itself is bustling and full of energy from residents and their families.”

(Continued from front)

it feels like home,” said Sheri Freyer, whose mother-in-law is a resident. “Now when I visit, we enjoy walks in the park and activities along the way that make our interactions more meaningful. Even on the dreariest days, I come here and it feels like sunshine. There’s also plenty to do for family members of all ages making it more pleasant for visits. It really warms my heart.”

It is not just the residents and families who are reaping the benefits of the new space, employees are benefiting from expanded access to resident care tools and boosted morale.

“The space itself is bustling and full of energy from residents and their families. The renovations have enhanced the way we deliver care and increased quality of life for our residents while boosting staff morale,” said Tom Schattinger, director of operations for Loretto. “By providing employees with additional tools for care, we have improved their ability to interact with residents clinically and socially which is good for everyone.”

What’s Ahead

The changes at The Cunningham are only the first phase of Loretto’s commitment to remain the leader of Memory Care services in Central New York. Construction has also begun on The Borer Center for Aging Excellence at The Nottingham. This new assisted-living community is an expansion of the continuum of care we offer and also will house an additional 20,000 sq. ft. of space to provide classrooms, space to support continuing education for staff and offices to accommodate partners advancing the latest research studies.

And, plans are being developed for work at The Heritage, our existing assisted living facility dedicated to providing dementia care, to renovate kitchens and common areas, as well as to convert the existing solariums into spacious apartments.

Get Involved:

At Loretto, we are committed to becoming the lead provider of Memory Care in this community. As we continue to invest our energies and resources in providing the best quality of care for individuals with dementia, we ask that you join us. To learn more about Loretto’s RememberMe Memory Care Campaign, and ways you can get involved to enhance the lives of our residents, go to www.lorettocny.org/memorycare or feel free to contact Julie Sheedy, Chief of Marketing and Engagement at: 315-413-3480.