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The old “nursing home” concept with its institutional feel and uninspired atmosphere, meals and activities makes many older people reluctant to move into such a facility. Even those who need living assistance and can afford it don’t want to live in a place where little thought is given to their needs and preferences, according to Irina Strembitsky, care counselor at the recently opened Orchard at Tucker.

“We wanted something completely different from the old model—a place that feels more like a resort than a healthcare facility,” Strembitsky said.

The facility on Tucker’s Idlewood Road features five-star dining with menu options every day. “If someone doesn’t like what’s on the menu, we’ll make something just for that person,” Strembitsky said. There also is a bistro, a crafts area, a library, a computer room, a putting green, a game room, a hair salon and spa, a patio, walking paths and gardens, cable television and more.

The concept came from Arkadiy Yakubov, who is now Orchard’s director. He was looking for an assisted living home for his grandmother and was disappointed to see what was on the market.

“She wanted to be a part of a community where people are treated with dignity and respect ... where her voice meant something and where great and healthy food was not a treat but part of a daily routine. More importantly, she wanted to be part of a family and not part of huge corporation,” Yakubov notes on

Orchard's website.



The concept for Orchard at Tucker, an assisted living facility, began when the facility's director became disappointed when looking for a place for his grandmother.

In response to his grandmother's wishes, he created a small personal care home in Brookhaven for her and a few others. Later he decided he wanted to make such accommodations available to other older people. "After eight years in business, I am more passionate about this field than when I started," Yakubov continued. "My goal is to provide each family with peace of mind and treat every one of our residents as my Grandma Berta."

"We're not doing this to stand out among assisted living facilities," Strembitsky said. "We want to inspire other places to come up to this standard. Our motto is 'more than assisted living, we are an assisted living movement.'"

Orchard at Tucker held the grand opening of the 47-apartment building in late August. Phase two, which adjoins the current building, is scheduled to open early in 2016.

The apartments are either studio style or one bedroom with a sitting area and bathroom. "We encourage residents to socialize—to eat and engage in recreational activities with others—so there is no need for a kitchen or dining area in individual apartments," Strembitsky said. "Residents have their private space, but also many opportunities to mingle with others."

She said the team that planned Orchard are all on-site at the facility. "There's no corporate office overseeing us from afar," Strembitsky said. "That not only means that we're here every day seeing what's going on, but we save money because there's no corporate office to support."

Strembitsky added that resident input is equally important to the operation of the facility. "Some places

wait until a person has moved in to start figuring out what his or her needs and preferences are. We ask questions before the person moves in so he or she can be comfortable right away.”

Some residents select furniture from the home they’re moving from so that the new setting immediately feels like home. Others enjoy starting over with new furnishings. “Most people keep their home for a few months to be sure they like the new arrangement. If they don’t like living here, that’s not a problem. There’s not contract; they’re free to move out at any time,” Strembitsky said.

Orchard’s staff members are professionally trained to provide personal care services that may include assistance with bathing, dressing, grooming, therapy and medication management and care is taken to assure each person is safe. “Some people have health conditions that were made worse by not taking medications properly or a stroke or fall that was not attended to promptly. We make sure nothing like that happens here,” Strembitsky said.

There also are specialized memory care services for those living with dementia. The care staff and the leadership team were trained by a nationally recognized dementia expert Teepa Snow and ongoing training keeps staff current on dementia-related awareness, knowledge, and skill, according to Strembitsky.

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