

# suburban life



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Director of Dining Services  
Dashaun London

**At Arbor Terrace Exton,**  
residents in need of personal  
care or memory care become  
part of a supportive community  
built on enrichment,  
engagement, and  
independence.

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# Connected

by **Bill Donahue** | photos by **Jody Robinson**

**At Arbor Terrace Exton, residents in need of personal care or memory care become part of a supportive community built on enrichment, engagement, and independence.**

**E**very life transition comes with its share of hardships, though some are more challenging than others. For older adults with age-related difficulties such as cognitive decline and limited mobility or dexterity, making the transition from their longtime home to a communal setting can be a steep climb indeed.

Enter Arbor Terrace Exton, which strives to make the transition as smooth as possible for individuals in need of personal care and memory care. The community's highly trained and compassionate staff goes "above and beyond" to help each resident approach each day with hope, dignity, and a sense of purpose, according to Sue Haines, the community's executive director.

"When a resident moves to this community, maybe she or he has lost a spouse, and they want the safety and security of having other people around," says Haines. "We understand that it can be a difficult time for residents and their adult children who want to help their parents rediscover their independence. The environment we've created here provides [residents] with the opportunity to make friends, share new experiences with others, and return to doing things they enjoy, even if it's something as simple as celebrating the holidays."

Haines, who joined Arbor Terrace Exton in February, brings to the community a wealth of administrative experience in nursing homes and long-term-care communities. She also has the wisdom of personal experience; her mother currently lives in another community in the Philadelphia area closer to other members of the family.

"Seeing my mother go from lonely to engaged to saying, 'I can't have lunch with you today because I'm having lunch with the girls,' meaning her fellow residents, that's a win," she says. "That's the same dynamic we strive for here—helping residents feel safe, happy, and well taken care of. They look out for one another, and they learn to become whole again."

Residents benefit from amenities such as a fitness center, a professional concierge, and an on-site salon and spa, as well as spacious grounds ideal for strolling and exploring. Also, those

who are able and interested can participate in regular excursions to enjoy the richness of the community's Chester County surroundings.

Arbor Terrace Exton is particularly well known for its culinary program, courtesy of Dashaun London. As the community's director of dining services, London oversees the menu creation, ordering, staffing, and food preparation, among other duties; he even helps to prepare lunches for residents' field trips. One of the most demanding yet satisfying aspects of his job involves coordinating celebrations around a full calendar of holidays, everything from Christmas and Passover to Cinco de Mayo and Martin Luther King Day.

London began his culinary career as a teenager. Since then he has honed his skills in various kitchens, including working as the executive chef for a restaurant in Philadelphia. He also has prior experience in geriatric health care—he spent time working as a certified medication technician—though he feels he's able to best serve seniors by putting his culinary talents to good use.

"I feel like my role here is very important," he says. "Food is part of everything we do, and I'm here to make residents happy. Part of that comes from inviting residents' family members to every special event. We've had some amazing turnouts. A few of [residents' family members] have even told me they prefer our food over what they get at restaurants. I love that kind of feedback."





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— SUE HAINES,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
ARBOR TERRACE EXTON

but we also want to have strong connections with their families," she says. "Our care plans are ongoing, so I encourage family members to tell me about any changes they may be seeing [in a resident], because that can make all the difference. Email me, text me, call me, talk to me in the hall. That level of communication is one of the most important things we do. It's not just about sad updates, either; I want to hear about Mom getting her hair done or doing something else that makes her happy."

Arbor Terrace Exton strives to help every resident, regardless of which neighborhood they call home, enjoy as much independence and enrichment as possible. Haines suggests the community does so by continually refining the ways in which residents, their families, and team members collaborate so they can "take the journey together."

"When you come to our community, either as a resident, as a visitor, or as a member of our team, we want you to feel *fun* and feel *family*," she says. "It's probably on no one's bucket list to end up in personal care or memory care, but it is community living. When it's engaged properly, as I believe we're doing here, the journey can be a rewarding one for all involved."

"We want our residents to feel that they haven't lost their sense of self, and perhaps they have even gained it back," she continues. "They make friends. They feel valued. They feel safe. No matter what level of care they need, they feel like they are part of a community. We do everything we can to help their families have that same feeling of welcoming and inclusiveness when they visit. That sense of belonging is what I love about the environment here." ■

Arbor Terrace Exton offers three distinct living options, or "neighborhoods": Personal Care at Arbor Terrace Exton, for those looking to enjoy their retirement with additional care and assistance; the Bridges neighborhood, for those with early-stage cognitive decline; and Evergreen Memory Care, for residents in need of specialized around-the-clock care for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

Each resident who lives in Evergreen Memory Care receives a personalized care

plan carried out by the team led by Lisa Tatarelli, LPN, the community's director of memory care. In addition to hands-on experience gained from more than 16 years in nursing, Tatarelli has earned numerous certifications and undergone rigorous training to learn about the ways in which cognitive decline affects the brain and body. Such training has enabled her to better serve residents as well as their families.

"Our residents are our primary priority,



Residents benefit from amenities such as a fitness center, a professional concierge, and an on-site salon and spa, as well as an art studio and ample dining options.



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