

## SMART MOVES

# The spa treatment

With a contemporary design scheme, high-tech equipment and amenities, CommuniCare's Green Park property raises the bar for short-term rehab



CommuniCare Green Park now offers a modern, sleek look to complement resident-focused services. The community is targeting short-term rehab patients in contrast to those needing longer term care.

**W**hen people want to get a makeover, they sometimes go to the spa. CommuniCare Green Park In St. Louis shows that buildings can undergo a similar experience. In this case, the fresh new look is a gleaming, modern design that has been developed specifically for a certain kind of patient.

"The medical spa model has been created for patients who are between 60-70 years old who will rehabilitate and then go home," said Laura Kuhl, vice president of strategic development for Cincinnati, OH-based CommuniCare. "This is different from the long-term care model, where people live and receive nursing support for chronic con-

ditions. This is for short stays; you don't live in a spa."

The short-term rehabilitation therapy unit has a unique case-load and the design has been tailored to reflect that clientele, Kuhl said.

Based on market numbers and physician referrals, patients are there predominantly for orthopedic or medical rehab. This type of patient is unlike others in the long-term care field, so CommuniCare leaders decided the facility environment should be customized for their specific needs.

"This population may be in their 70s, but they are still fit and strong so the therapy space is like their favorite gym or sports medicine center," she said. "We feel like we're just beginning with this."

The renovation is what Kuhl describes as a "delete-and-replace, major repositioning" project in which an assisted living and nursing facility was converted into a post-acute rehab center. The effort conforms with the corporate office's decision to create a new cultural experience for those who need rehabilitation and post-acute care.

"We are a mission-oriented culture," Kuhl said. "Our goal was to create a totally new experience for this industry and change it completely. We didn't want it to be anything like what has existed in the past."

The redesign initiative is more than just cosmetic, Kuhl said. She noted it extends to procedures and front line culture.

## ABOUT THIS SERIES

Aging physical facilities are a widespread challenge facing long-term care operators today. Each **SMART MOVES** installment offers a variety of ways to transform your community, while also improving your residents' quality of life.

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For instance, care protocols are now in the control of community physicians to ensure the best possible recovery plans.

"We want to make sure that our facilities are much more than a pretty place to go," she said.

The directive comes from founder and CEO Stephen Rosedale, who has created an environment of excellence and a climate of respect for all individuals at CommuniCare. While Stephen is the "keeper of the culture," his son Isaac has been the visionary behind the ambitious design scheme. The master plan is to physically transform each of CommuniCare's 43 properties while retaining the company's commitment to providing Ritz Carlton-level service to its residents.

"Our number one mantra is making a difference in the lives of others," Kuhl said. "It is about making a difference for each person in the facility every day so that their quality of life is better. This could mean something as simple as going out and getting them blueberries for their cereal."

The firm embraces a holistic caregiving philosophy. On its website, the company notes that its mission is to "promote the well being of its residents, enrich their existence, and uphold the sanctity of life."

"We strive to turn the problems of old age into challenges of rehabilitation, to change social isolation into warm friendship and a reorientation to what is good in life," the statement proclaims. "We perform our professional duties in ministering to the body, but recognize that our most important task is to nourish the soul," the statement concludes.

### Uncharted territory

While the CommuniCare executive team knew what it wanted



The CommuniCare executive team counted on guidance from Stevens Point, WI-based Joerns Healthcare. The result was a dramatically different community.

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*Laura Kuhl, vice president of strategic development for CommuniCare*

from a philosophical, practical and operational standpoint, it needed guidance from Stevens Point, WI-based Joerns Healthcare on the physical look and feel of the new short-term rehab center.

Joerns' senior interior designer Terri Prokop consulted the CommuniCare team and her input helped the sensory elements of the project take shape.

"We used very calming, neutral colors that would lend to the feel of a high-end and contemporary building," she said. "The modern theme is becoming more and more popular – it gives the feeling of being on the cutting edge and also emits a very high-end image."

Joerns sales representative Terry Cox provided the local contact for the process and worked closely with Kuhl and Isaac Rosedale to execute the vision.

He stated: "The look they wanted was modern and clean, with sleek lines – and it is a very impressive look," he said.

"Based on CommuniCare's cutting edge model, one of our challenging and rewarding tasks was putting together the right pieces to support the theme."

Admittedly, the project took Cox out of his comfort zone. After he realized the magnitude of the challenge, he says he made it his highest priority to find furnishings that fit the contemporary décor. His solutions were multi-faceted, including connecting with the hospitality industry, and ordering new styles and custom pieces.

"Joerns has the capabilities to make and modify what they want," he said. "We worked very closely with them to make sure everything was right," Cox added.

Joerns handled a plethora of furnishings and design accessories for resident rooms, lounges, common areas, cubicles, nursing stations, offices and specialty rooms. Among the items Joerns provided were furniture, beds, case goods, window treat-

ments and bedspreads.

"I am a facilitator – not a designer, architect or construction manager," Kuhl said. "If there is a problem, I need Terry to solve it. He is the one guy who knows everything that is moving."

### Above and beyond

As the project progressed, Kuhl learned the value of having a partner like Joerns on board, saying "it is so important to have a vendor you can collaborate with. Terry is in the building on the same day we ask him to come. Sometimes I forget we're working with Joerns; we think Terry works for us. He is very much my project manager."

Joerns' method is to have its reps go above and beyond, and the folks at CommuniCare say they truly appreciate that effort. In Cox's case, Kuhl said she needed someone "who was humble enough to go outside the box... a boutique player who is willing to learn as much as we are."

The Green Park spa is just the beginning of the CommuniCare transformation process. More renovations are scheduled over the next three to five years, though only a few are for short-term rehab. The others are more traditional segments, yet the company will be implementing culture change and dynamic physical plant designs throughout all of them, Kuhl said.

"We are setting the bar so high that we may fall a little short, but it's better than not setting the bar high at all," she said. ■

### Coming next month

**SMART MOVES** will examine ways to create a more home-like environment.

