



## Evacuation brings out the strength around us

By Ellen Waldman

October 6, 2020

*"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."*

— Coretta Scott King

Through so much recent grief due to the fires, our communities are still pulling together to help.

Here are some uplifting examples of how residents living in adult communities were cared for during this crisis. To start, these care providers and staff are the ones who oversee and support our aging friends and family each day. For those with dementia needing specialized care, this work is some of the most challenging.

Under these very compromised conditions of both the fires and COVID-19, what they did was remarkable.

Here are some of the positive actions that occurred in these communities when the fires erupted. At the north end of Ashland, the Village at Valley View, a memory care community, ([villagevalleyview.com](http://villagevalleyview.com); 541-482-0888), was given the use of passenger vans from TC Chevrolet. They moved their residents to Pear Valley Senior Living's memory care in Central Point, ([compass-living.com/senior-living/or/central-point/pear-valley](http://compass-living.com/senior-living/or/central-point/pear-valley); 541-727-6245).

Notice that saying they moved them does not describe how difficult this might be for people who have varying degrees of cognitive impairment. On a normal day, many people with this disease don't like to leave the safe and familiar environments in which they're living. Imagine how skillfully the staff must have worked to make this happen.

Pear Valley graciously accepted them into their "home," and was able to care for the residents until they were all able to return safely. One of my clients living there told his wife he was having a good time and was very happy, but wanted to go back to his home, meaning the Village at Valley View. This was surely confusing for them, but having the staff well-trained and able to provide this compassionate care made a big difference.

Another example of grace under pressure was the evacuation of the Rogue Valley Manor's 900-plus residents ([retirement.org/rvm](http://retirement.org/rvm); 541-857-7777). It so happened that I was there the day the fires started, overseeing a moving company removing furniture from a client's home. When the residents were told to evacuate, the employees found a way to transport and guide all of their residents to safety.

This was no small undertaking, but again, it was accomplished with efficiency and a reassuring presence. Some went to the Rogue Valley Country Club, some to skilled nursing facilities, and others to memory care communities. One person I know even chose to sleep in her car with her cat at The Expo in Central Point.

They are now all back in their homes.

I know of one private caregiver who took her client with moderate dementia, and who lived alone in an area that had to evacuate, back to her own home. Then, when that area was being evacuated, the caregiver took her to a friend's house in Grants Pass. The client told the caregiver that as long as they were together, she felt happy and safe.

Over and above what these front-line teams do on a daily basis to care for our older community members, you can also see their extreme dedication. Many times, through the years, I have reminded others how precious these people are to those they care for.

They may not be the highest-paid workers, but they do this service with great heart. If you've ever taken care of an aging individual, or someone with any cognitive impairment, you know how taxing this can be.

Many of the people who provide this invaluable service live in Talent or Phoenix, as well as other communities that were impacted by fires. Sadly, too many have lost all they once owned. And still, most of them will go to work, caring for our loved ones with skill and diligence.

This is the greatness of compassion in our communities.