

Options when it's time for a new living situation

By Ellen Waldman

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My client, Carol (not her real name), lived in the Rogue Valley for a long time. Her husband was diagnosed with dementia, and when it became more advanced, he was placed in a memory care community. So, even before he passed away, Carol lived on her own. Then, her husband died, the Almeda fire burned down her home, and she moved to Portland to be closer to her adult children. She purchased a new home, but faced the loneliness from losing her husband, her home, and former community of over 40 years. She also missed having peers in her life, even though she saw her children from time to time. What to do next? It was time to consider congregate living of some type.

Fortunately, we have a wide-range of housing options to choose from, but it can become confusing and overwhelming. Especially if you wait until you need an immediate decision, you may not make the right move. Here's the spectrum of choices, with some examples of each.

Step 1: When people are cognitively and functionally healthy, they can live at home or in an independent retirement community. At some point, they still might need to supplement with paid care assistance. Examples of retirement communities are Mountain Meadows in Ashland and Twin Creeks in Central Point. There are several more communities that offer both independent and assisted living, which might make it easier to move from one care level to another.

Step 2: Assisted living works well for people who have some chronic issues, early-stage dementia, or are beginning to decline, and need some basic, minimal daily help. This includes assistance with medications, bathing, dressing, etc. Meals are included, as is basic housecleaning. Examples of assisted living are Maple Ridge in Ashland and The Springs at Veranda Park in Medford. Additional paid care providers might still be needed, as the caregiving assistance is only provided for small blocks of time.

Step 3: Cognitive impairment (dementia) has its own category of options, since this care requires specialized training and an environment designed to accommodate these needs. Memory care communities provide round-the-clock-care for their residents and allows them to remain safe and appropriately engaged. Some examples are Village at Valley View in Ashland, Kinsington Oak Grove in Medford, and Pear Valley in Central Point. Moving a person into memory care has its own particular challenges and may require guidance on when and how to move for a better outcome.

Step 4: The next level of care is offered at smaller, adult foster care homes, for those who have advanced chronic illness, more advanced dementia, or frailty. For some, this is where they will receive care at the end of their life as well. To locate one with openings, go to FindAdultFosterCare.com.

Step 5: Not really a next step, a continuing care retirement community encompasses all these options, plus a skilled nursing facility, a medical clinic, and other amenities. The only local facility that meets these criteria is the Rogue Valley Manor.

The costs associated with each of these options varies widely, and almost all are paid for out-of-pocket.

For Carol, the wish to be more engaged prompted her to move to an independent/retirement living community in Portland, which also provided assisted living options down the line. Now she could socialize with peers again, and not worry about home ownership responsibilities, either. For her, this was a really good outcome.