

JRC readies for Stark's aging population

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The Adult Day Center, 3300 Parkway St. NW, is undergoing a \$6 million, 10,000 square-foot upgrade and expansion.

CANTON TWP. By the year 2026, nearly 25 percent of Stark County's residents will be 65 or older.

Tom Thompson, executive director of JRC, is spearheading an effort to prepare for an influx of those who may need the services of the JRC Adult Day Center.

The center, 3300 Parkway St. NW, is undergoing a \$6 million, 10,000 square-foot upgrade and expansion to serve twice as many seniors, as well as a new 5-Star Learning Center for infants and children through pre-kindergarten.

"There's such a need," Thompson said. "We've got a crisis coming with seniors if we don't come up with a means of affordable care."

Once completed, the facility will be a total of 31,000 square feet. JRC bought the former Meyers Lake Ballroom for \$1.3 million in 2018 after relocating the Adult Day Care service from Trinity United Church of Christ in Plain Township in 2016. It sits on 3.3 acres.

Thompson said many of the 30 to 35 people the Adult Day Center currently serves have low-to-moderate incomes and qualify for help through the Medicare waiver program, which enables them to remain home rather than enter a nursing facility.

"The quality of life is so much better (and) then they don't have to enter nursing care prematurely," he said.

Members, not clients

Thompson said people who attend the day care are referred to as "members," not clients.

"We want them to feel like they belong here," he said. "It's all about the dignity of the individual."

He said having adult day care in communities makes it easier for families, pointing out that caring for others is a major reason why people call off from their jobs.

"It's almost as much about the caregivers as it is about the person," he said.

The expansion will include a larger kitchen with the capacity to produce 300 meals a day, which will serve the Adult Day center and the children; an enlarged patio; additional handicapped-accessible restrooms; a Telemed center where families can consult with doctors; and a wellness clinic where providers can offer in-person services.

"It's trying to provide everything within the center to make it easier," Thompson added, "so a loved one doesn't have to miss work."

The center currently includes a “memory room.” Underwritten by the Sisters of Charity Foundation, it features old-school furniture and appliances as a source of occupational activity for people with memory issues.

“They can remember things from long ago,” Thompson said.

No details are left to chance. For instance, the dining area features bright lime-green table cloths because research shows it’s one of the last colors people who suffer from dementia can recall, and they can discern it from their food, Thompson said.

They also worked with a consultant who recommended certain colors to paint the walls.

Ready for kindergarten

Thompson, noting that 75 percent of the brain develops by age 3, said JRC decided to open a second Learning center for children because the northwest and southwest quadrants of Canton don’t have a 5-Star child care facility.

Currently, 66.5 percent of the county’s young children are not enrolled in early childhood education, largely due to cost, he said.

“If a child isn’t ready for kindergarten, they’re not going to catch up to their peers,” he said.

With eight classrooms and two playgrounds, the new Early Learning Center will generate 30 new full-time jobs.

“It’s a mile from the Hall of Fame Village, a mile from Mercy and a mile from Aultman, the biggest employer in Canton,” he said. “We want to be able to serve those parents. It will be comforting for them to have their children so close.”

The new child facility also will partner with the nearby Meyers Lake YMCA, which operates a kindergarten. Currently, Adult Day Care members visit the Y once a week to take for swimming and water exercise.

Thompson said a capital improvement campaign has raised \$5 million of the \$6.1 million needed. Over the years, local foundations have invested \$2 million, he said.

The expansion is being built in three phrases, with the first to be completed by Dec. 31. The goal is total completion by the end of 2020.

The facility will be named the ***Myrna A. Pastore Campus***.

To learn more, visit www.JRCcares.org.

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