

HEARTS OF GOLD

Two years ago I walked into a memory support facility in Gerringong NSW; I had recently moved to the area with my partner from Tasmania and had graduated with a degree in dementia from the University of Tasmania the year before. So I was eager to specialise in an area I had become passionate about over the past three years.

From the moment I stepped into the door, I was greeted by smiling faces from the manager to staff and residents. The staff on duty proudly showed me around and introduced me to the people who lived there.

The facility has 25 rooms on two floors both have access to small secluded gardens. The building is 25 years old and in need of refurbishment which thankfully will be taking place next year.

All of the staff I encountered were welcoming warm and caring individuals who were there solely for the people who lived there. As one person commented “*it was certainly not for the money*”; it was because the people chosen to work here are special souls who have “*Hearts of Gold*” and put the needs of the people living with dementia first and foremost in every aspect of care they provide.

These are unsung heroes who care for our Mums, Dads, Grandparents and friends not only building lasting trusted relationships with the residents but with the extended family and friends adopting a relationship-centered care approach.

The smiling faces and willingness to provide all the care needs and placing the person first working as a team to deliver actual quality care is what they do every day. These people are unique in their approach to the needs of the individual and are always eager to learn new strategies when behaviours or situations change or develop which require specific changes in daily care.

Sometimes the conditions are stressful and difficult yet all are empathetic patient and above all truly loving compassionate characters, who share a sense of humour and love of life.

From time to time residents become palliative and require end of life specialised pain-free comfort care; this is done diligently, respectfully and with open hearts, whilst providing support to grieving families and friends.

The folk who come to share time with your loved ones do so living every day with fun, laughter, optimism and hope. Emotionally & physically the work can be demanding in so many ways yet everyone providing this service is truly amazing warm empathetic benevolent individuals.

I have felt blessed to have had the opportunity to share time in my life not only with the amazing people who live in this home but with the dedicated protagonists who come to work each day with love in the hearts; never knowing what to expect yet are strong and committed to making life as happy as they would for their own family.

If you look up the definition of Hearts of Gold you will find it to be described as “*a very kind and good nature*”. This expression alludes to gold in the sense of “*something valued for its goodness*.” In my opinion, this is nowhere near the measure of goodness in the hearts of these dedicated people; they are unique exceptional individuals whom we trust with our nearest and dearest. Their daily contribution to care needs is a true labour of love.

“*Hearts of Gold*” may you always flourish and continue to provide the love and care we all would expect if we were faced with living in a residential facility ourselves.



Michael Preston

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