



Photograph courtesy of Oakwood Lutheran Senior Ministries

Independent LIVING

Choosing A Lifestyle

BY JENNIFER KLUG

Wisconsin's changing seasons bring the excitement and anticipation of vibrant colors on the trees in fall, the long sunny days of summer, freshly fallen snow in winter, and the emergence of flowers and green grass each spring. But the change in seasons and weather also brings thoughts of yard work, shoveling, cleaning, gardening, and keeping up a house that may seem bigger and more overwhelming each year. Many seniors find themselves torn between keeping their home with all the fond memories it carries and the practical need for

downsizing to something smaller, and the thought of change is scary.

For seniors who are still independent and caring for themselves, assisted living may not be the next logical step. However, there is another option. Independent living is about a lifestyle that offers social opportunities and a sense of community without the hassles of upkeep that come with owning a home. The words independent living describe a range of options, from simple apartment living in a 55+ community to an apartment complex with daily services and amenities, such as meals, activities,

and sometimes even transportation. Seniors can choose a community with all the features and amenities they want at this point in their lives.

Even after the decision is made to make a move, mixed emotions, doubt, and even second thoughts may linger. Is this the right time? What about the happy memories from years in the house? These are natural reactions, and by embracing them rather than avoiding the conversation, families can find great joy in this process of preparing to make another important, exciting life change.

At this point, it's important to take time to look back at milestones and memories—to reminisce and remember the good times in the home. Pull out the old photos and go through the carefully packed boxes tucked in the attic for safekeeping. No doubt there will be laughter and tears. Seniors, friends, and families alike realize the memories will always be with them—in their hearts and thoughts.

Feeling alone in the decision-making process is hard. But as with all milestones in life, others have experienced the same feelings. Reaching out to an independent living community is a great way to start the conversation. Many hold regular social events for residents, and guests are often welcomed.

This type of visit provides a glimpse into the lifestyle at an independent living community, as well as an opportunity to ask questions of people who have experienced the transition firsthand. And for most seniors who incorporate independent living into their home, there is one thought shared over and over: "I wish I had made the move sooner."

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