



**Residents Flourish at Villa Gardens Horizon Academy**  
***Memory care day program keeps residents engaged***  
***while spouses receive needed respite***

When Jon and Susan Innskeep first moved to Villa Gardens, Susan was showing the first signs of memory loss. Now, five years later, Susan needs more support, something that has become more and more difficult for Jon to provide on his own.

“It was getting to a point where I needed to make a decision about possibly moving to an assisted living memory care community, but since I don’t need assisted living I did not like the fact that if we moved, my wife and I would be separated, living in two different places. Thank goodness for Horizon Academy.”

Horizon Academy is Villa Gardens’ memory care day program that offers residents with memory loss an alternative to living full-time in memory support accommodations. Instead, Horizon Academy is a whole-person, wellness-centered day care program that enhances cognition, improves memory skills, physical movement, socialization and emotional connections. Villa residents may attend up to seven days a week. They arrive at 10 a.m. and leave by 4 p.m. returning back to their homes and spouses. During their time at Horizon Academy, residents socialize, participate in activities designed specifically for those with cognitive impairment, enjoy entertainment and group outings, exercise classes, trivia games, reading aloud, sing-alongs and dancing. Their spouses know they are receiving the best of care while they receive a needed respite.

“My wife loves Horizon,” Jon said. “Horizon does a much better job than I could ever do in keeping my wife engaged. I didn’t know how to provide the care she needed and how to keep her engaged. Horizon Academy gives her just the right amount of care she needs during the day and gives me peace of mind. It gives me the opportunity to run errands and do other things without having to worry about Susie. An added bonus is that each afternoon Susie comes home and we can stay together in our home.”

Because Villa Gardens does not have a specific residential program for those with Alzheimer’s, staff recognized the need to offer some additional support to residents with cognitive issues. Horizon opened a year ago after veteran caregiver Aura Molina saw a need at Villa Gardens and suggested a solution.

“After working at Villa Gardens for 23 years as a caregiver and team leader I’ve seen people’s conditions change,” Aura said. “People with memory issues need a special kind of care and a special understanding. Sometimes that’s difficult for a spouse to handle and understand.”

Two caregivers, Juanita Ramirez and Oneida Cortez, certified nursing assistants from Villa Gardens' residential living, volunteered to be trained in techniques to care for those with memory impairment.

Following completion of their training, Villa Gardens initially offered seven residents care three days a week. Now, Horizon Academy has 12 residents who visit the academy four to seven days a week.

"Residents look forward to coming to the program," Juanita said. "I can see it on their faces, how they act and the excitement they bring to the group each day. And their spouses tell me that their attitudes have changed. They seem happier."

"I applaud our staff for recognizing a need and suggesting an innovative solution to meet it," said Villa Gardens Executive Director Dmitry Estrin. "Our incredible staff and their passion for catering to our residents set Villa Gardens apart from our competition."

Recently, Front Porch's Winners' Circle program, which measures more than 70 standards of service at Front Porch communities, praised the Horizon Academy for its innovation in meeting residents' needs and deemed it as a Front Porch "Best Practice."

"Juanita and Oneida displayed passion and pride in caring for the residents and the residents enjoyed reading poetry to each other," said Winners' Circle Director Robert Chillison. "I saw a spirited group singing and enjoying lunch while being entertained by an outside professional musician. The Horizon Academy is an example of what is Humanly Possible<sup>SM</sup>!"

#### **About Front Porch**

*Front Porch is one of the largest not-for-profit providers of retirement living communities in Southern California. Front Porch active adult and full-service retirement communities offer a full range of options from independent living to continuing care, along with specialized programs like memory support. With innovative communities and programs that meet the changing needs of people as they age, Front Porch communities represent a leading-edge approach to wellness in aging. Front Porch is comprised of 10 full-service retirement communities in California and two adult living communities: one in Louisiana and one in Florida. Of these, five are Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC). Front Porch, based in Glendale, Calif. and founded in 1999, is a not-for-profit organization that gives back to its residents and the communities it serves.*