

Community is Why You Feel Welcome at Vista del Monte

Helen McCann had just lost her husband when she started thinking about where she wanted to live. She knew it wasn't in the home they once shared that was now too large for one person. But where?

"I wanted a community where I could have privacy *and* a sense of community, not where every time I opened my door, everyone would ask, 'Where are you going?'" Helen said with a laugh. "I wanted an apartment on the ground floor, no stairs. I did not want a hallway. I also had two dogs and, you'd be surprised, but not every retirement community is thrilled with that."

She found everything on her floor-plan checklist - along with a friendly welcome for her dogs — at Vista del Monte, a continuing care retirement community in Santa Barbara.

Complete with a Wellness Center, a newly remodeled dining room and a fitness and aquatic center that boasts a professionally recognized senior fitness program, the 9.5-acre campus is a just mile from the beach and five minutes from downtown. But passers-by often don't realize it's there.

That sense of privacy extends from the grounds dotted with pines, fountains and citrus trees and into the apartments that Vista del Monte residents call home.

At Helen's courtyard home, the patio door opens onto a garden area surrounded by a low fence and a lush forest of ferns. The outdoor space features potted plants, a water bowl for her chocolate lab, Suzy, and the lounge chair where she likes to relax on warm evenings.

"I'm a California girl," Helen said. "I've always had a backyard, so this apartment really appealed to me."



But while Helen appreciates a division between public and personal spaces, fellow Vista del Monte resident Jan Purcell revels in the neighborly camaraderie offered by her cheerful second-floor apartment she moved into nearly eight years ago. Its patio and picture windows look onto a canopy of jacaranda and pepper trees, while the front door opens onto an interior hallway that can be reached by stairs or elevator.

"I try to keep the door open, so if anyone wants to stop in and chat, they can," Jan said. "This is the kind of place where there's always a neighbor who's going to give you that egg or cup of sugar you need."

Find your ideal home

The fact that Helen and Jan both found their ideal, yet very different, living arrangements at Vista del Monte highlights what makes the campus a best choice for anyone considering senior living community options.

"There are so many ways to make the Vista del Monte experience uniquely your own while also enjoying the values, mission and the overall vibe of the community," said Sales and Marketing Manager Wendy Cafferky.

Vista del Monte offers independent living, assisted living and memory care onsite. Services included in the monthly fee, with or without a continuing care contract, range from housekeeping and chef-prepared meals to on-site security and an emergency call and response system for added peace of mind.

Additional-fee services include guest rooms for visitors, an on-site salon and barber shop, and non-emergency nursing and other support services. For residents in need of a little more TLC, the Truly Yours program offers a variety of plans that include assisted-living services such as medication management, bathing, dressing and more, in the privacy of their home at Vista.

Stay healthy, fit and engaged

Already an avid swimmer before moving to Santa Barbara, Helen loves having access to the Vista del Monte Fitness & Aquatic Center (FAC) as a major benefit. (Other local seniors agree: FAC memberships are a hot ticket among non-residents.) The shallow-water, heated exercise pool offers aqua aerobics, water volleyball and Helen's personal favorites: lap and open-swim sessions. An "endless pool" is Vista's newest feature, which is available for lap swimming against a gentle current or for physical therapy.

The FAC's strength-training and conditioning room is also exceptional. Classes range from simple but effective seated-chair exercises to open-gym times showcasing several pieces of equipment that are so state-of-the-art you won't find them in public gyms, said Heidi Reyes, the FAC's manager.

"It's so important to keep your body strong and healthy throughout the aging process, and we have lots of ways to keep it fun along the way," Heidi said.

Jan agrees. Still recuperating from recent hip-replacement surgery, she is looking forward to kicking up her heels at an upcoming dance in the main lounge.

"I'm just going to start moving around and getting some other people out there on the dance floor with me," Jan said, laughing.



“People *are* so warm and welcoming here,” Helen said. “It’s been such a healing environment for me.”

These days, Helen calls on her expertise as a retired department administrator to serve on the executive committee of the Resident Association. But she’s also delving into something she didn’t know about herself before arriving at Vista del Monte four years ago: She loves playing – and teaching others to play – mahjong.

“It has been magic,” Helen said of teaming up with local community members to offer mahjong classes on campus and at off-campus organizations like the University Club of Santa Barbara and the Jewish Federation of Greater Santa Barbara.

“The thing about a game like mahjong is, you make life-long friends. It’s just so important to connect and get to know each other and have a good time.”