

Craig Sumner: From Landscaper to Fredericka Manor Executive Director

Fredericka Manor Executive Director Craig Sumner remembers when he first applied for a position at the Chula Vista community, how he initially *did not* get the job and how a visit to the barber may have helped launch his successful career.



Craig was born in Preston, England, but at a young age, he moved with his family to Chula Vista, where he attended Rosebank Elementary School, just a few blocks east of Fredericka Manor.

“I was studying at Southwestern College and was looking for part time work so I came to interview at Fredericka Manor,” Craig said. “At the time I had shoulder-length hair and I did not get the job. I got a haircut and ended up interviewing again and then was offered the position of landscaper. I’m not sure the two were connected but I’m glad I got that haircut.”

“As a landscaper, I would work around the cottage homes, trimming the trees and bushes, but the best part of that job was connecting with the residents, talking to them and doing a good job for them,” Craig said.

That experience prompted Craig to seriously consider senior living as a career, having now moved on to San Diego State University. He began to think about his next steps to further his career when a sales position opened up.

“I looked at it as a good way to get a different view of retirement communities and Fredericka Manor,” Craig said. “I learned that the main competition for Fredericka Manor or any retirement community was a person’s home. Many had lived there for 20 plus years and they raised their family there. So that was really the hard part, to have prospective residents realize living at a retirement community could be their home.”

“I was working with a couple and they made the move to Fredericka Manor,” Craig remembers. “About three weeks later I saw them and asked how things were going. They said, ‘Craig, everything you told us about Fredericka Manor is true, we just wish we had made the move sooner.’ I have heard that story many times since, but that was my first realization that although it’s a hard transition to move into a retirement community for some, when they do make the move, most of

them wished they would have done it sooner.”

Craig said the different positions he has held (including a few years as Fredericka Manor’s plant operations director) offered satisfaction in different ways as well as shaping his work as executive director.

“Throughout all of it, it’s always been about the residents and prospective residents ... connecting with them, getting to know them and having them get to know me. I need to know them in order to serve them well.”

Craig received his first opportunity as an executive director at Fredericka’s sister community Villa Gardens in Pasadena. He enjoyed the experience and learned much, so when his mentor at Fredericka, Executive Director Scott Staehling retired, Craig jumped at the chance to return “home.”

“There was definitely excitement for me when I returned here,” Craig said. “My main goal is to maintain the culture that has always been here. High resident satisfaction, employee satisfaction, the sense of family. Fredericka is a great place to work and for me, a great career.”