

# Western Pennsylvania Guide to Good Health

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## Mount Vernon Provides Assisted Living and Secured Dementia Care in South Park

By John Fries

Riggs Road in South Park is an exceptionally picturesque suburban neighborhood. The road winds up and down gentle hills and through quiet tracts of modern, upscale homes. Nestled in this community is Mount Vernon of South Park, an assisted living and secured dementia care residence perched on a 13-acre hilltop where parking is plentiful and the view is magnificent.

Just inside the front doors, visitors enter an expansive, yet cozy, reception area outfitted with elegant appointments and even a crackling fireplace. Standing at the main desk, one gets the immediate impression that this is a special place indeed.

"The care we provide here is second to none," says Linda Laska, who holds a Master's degree in social work and serves as Mount Vernon's director of sales and marketing. "Our supportive environment allows each resident to achieve his or her highest level of personal independence."

"We not only care for each resident," adds Executive Director Bernard Erb, "we care about them." One only needs to tour the residence to see that claim come to life. The warmth and friendliness are immediately evident as you walk down the halls and interact with the smiling staff members.

At Mount Vernon of South Park, a full program of comprehensive services is available to residents who need help with daily activities. "Our care philosophy promotes compassion and dedication," says Laska, "and our staff strives to assist residents as they actively participate in maximizing their lives physically, emotionally and spiritually." From providing assistance with personal care and medications to escorting residents to meals and activities--along with quarterly assessments and service plan generation to ensure that residents and their family members are kept well-informed--the staff is extremely proactive and thorough.

One key feature of the residence is a specially designed, dedicated dementia unit for residents who require special care due to early stage Alzheimer's disease or other dementia disorders. "In this unit, Monticello Village," says Erb. "we promote a calm, safe and secure living environment through the activities we program and our specially trained nursing staff."

The residence includes such amenities as fully furnished private and semi-private rooms for residents, a formal dining room, three comfortable living rooms with fireplaces and large screen televisions, emergency call systems, courtyards with walking paths, whirlpool tubs and more. For a nominal fee, barber, beauty shop and laundry services are also available.

A wide range of services is available for residents. They include: round-the-clock nursing care availability; medical (ophthalmic, psychiatric and podiatry) services; physical, occupational and speech therapy; full personal assistance with bathing, dressing and other tasks; meals three times a day; nightly refreshments; housekeeping and daily linen services; a schedule of activities and more. There are also support groups for patients with Alzheimer's disease.

Although most residents stay at Mount Vernon of South Park for an extended time, short-term stays--ranging from a few days to a few weeks--are also available. This option is perfect for caregivers who need to take a vacation or go on a business trip, and also for seniors, as a transition opportunity between hospital and home when recuperating from an illness or operation.

And, for U.S. military veterans who served during wartime, financial assistance may be available through a relationship Mount Vernon of South Park has with the Veterans Administration.

"If you'd like to arrange a tour, please feel free to call at any time," urges Laska. "We'll be glad to show you around and describe the accommodations and services we offer in greater detail."

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