

Beverly Resident Marks 20 Years with Smith Senior Living

While in his senior year at Marist High School in 1992, Kevin McGee, now president and CEO of Smith Senior Living, visited his grandmother, Helen O'Connor, at Washington and Jane Smith, Smith Village's forerunner. As an active Beverly resident, she had just taken up residence at the life plan community located at 2320 W. 113th Place.

Now marking 20 years of service at Smith communities, McGee points to the organization's most recent achievement—95 percent occupancy at both Smith Village and its sister community, Smith Crossing—as an affirmation of the wisdom and dedication of Smith trustees and staff as the not-for-profit celebrates 94 years of uninterrupted service to older adults.

It may have been those first impressions that inspired McGee to study sociology at Eastern Illinois University. In 1997, McGee completed an internship at Smith while earning a master's degree in gerontology, also at Eastern Illinois University.

"After my internship, I took a job with another organization for seniors, but it just didn't have the same personal approach to residents and employees," McGee said. When he received an offer to become admissions coordinator at the Smith Home in 1998, McGee recalled, "I was reluctant at first because at the time Smith was a single-site organization, but then I was assured there were plans for growth

and that I would have opportunities for advancement."

The Beverly resident and father of four with Dr. Moira McQuillan McGee has seen many changes. "When I first started at Washington and Jane Smith, some residents were WWI veterans," McGee said. "Then came the Greatest Generation. Now, we're welcoming those who served during the Korean War and starting to talk with Vietnam veterans."

Today's age-62-plus adults are forward-looking and concerned about the quality of their lifestyle. Thanks to the GI Bill, more have had the benefit of higher education and enjoyed opportunities to travel. And, they're more health conscious, according to McGee.

"Residents today want more amenities, both in their apartments and in their community," McGee said. "They want full kitchens in their one- and two-bedroom apartments, but they also want to enjoy healthy meals prepared by an executive chef. They also exercise more, so our fitness centers are state-of-the-art. HUR exercise equipment automatically adjusts to wristbands residents wear to monitor their individualized workout routines. Like Smith Crossing, Smith Village has a

salon and spa, onsite movie theater and library. At Smith Village, we're in the process of adding a pub."

In 2000, McGee was promoted to associate executive director at Washington and Jane Smith. In 2003, he completed an MBA with a concentration in healthcare at St. Xavier University and took the helm for Smith Crossing in Orland Park, a life plan community then still under construction.



Marking 20 years with Smith Senior Living, Kevin McGee, president and CEO, recognizes the importance of commitment to community by providing high levels of service. Photo by Marc Monaghan

"Smith's Board has a history of being prudent stewards of resources for our organization as well as our residents," McGee said. "So, in the late 1990s, it was a big commitment to open Smith Crossing on a 32-acre campus that was once farmland. While Smith Crossing was still under construction, it became apparent it was essential to reinvest in the Beverly Morgan Park community and redevelop the Smith Home into what is now Smith Village."

As part of Smith Senior Living's renewed commitment to the 19th Ward, McGee assumed responsibilities as Smith Village executive director in 2007. In 2012, the Smith Senior Living board of trustees promoted McGee to serve as CEO.

Like many Smith Senior Living trustees and staff whose relatives

live at Smith communities, McGee has welcomed several of his own to Smith Village: his great aunt, Betty O'Connor; his aunt and uncle, Rita and Charlie O'Connor; his mother-in-law, Pat McQuillan; his mother's first cousin, Walter O'Grady and—as of April 2018—his father and mother, Phil and Noreen McGee.

"I have enough relatives living at Smith Village for a good size Thanksgiving dinner," he said. "Having relatives live here, shows how much Smith trustees and staff believe in Smith communities. My extended family is 'all in.'"

In recent years, McGee has shepherded the federally mandated transition from paper files to electronic medical records, and he's overseen major expansions and enhancements on both Smith campuses. Most recently, Smith Crossing broke ground for another wing with 46 private suites for short-term rehabilitation programs.

Through everything, Smith Senior Living communities have maintained a five-star rating with the federal regulating agency, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

"We know that sustaining a high level of service requires not just dedicated people, but generations of dedicated people. We had our start in the Beverly Morgan Park community, and thanks to a generous endowment in 1929 from Emilie Smith we can continue as a not-for-profit organization backed by resources that ensure peace of mind."