

New head of Sunrise Senior Living



As Sunrise Senior Living celebrates its 30th birthday, *Healthcare Business* meets the new American Head of Sunrise UK, Guy Geller, to find out more about him and the organisation.

Q. Congratulations on your appointment, why did you decide to work in the UK?

Although I have spent most of my life in America, I was born in the UK, so I jumped at the opportunity to come back and work here. My role is actually split between North America and our UK Head Office, so

receives the same quality of care in their old age in return.

Q. What made you choose Sunrise Senior Living to work for?

I have always admired the ethos of Sunrise Senior Living. When Paul

to focus on the minute detail in every community to make sure that it stays that way. For example, we design every Sunrise community to be like home. There are no florescent lights or hospital beds, instead we ensure that rooms get lots of natural sunlight and we use

them with them and they become part of our communities too.

We also work closely with animal rescue organisations to help them to home older pets that too often get overlooked for younger puppies and kittens at the shelter. Older cats and dogs, which are usually calm

Signature Experience, because every person receives it at Sunrise and we are now renowned for it.

As part of the experience each person has their own dedicated Care Manager who forms a close relationship with them and their families, and helps to incorporate

other forms of memory loss. Every Sunrise community has a special Reminiscence Area, which is designed and furnished to be supportive and comfortable, and offer a sense of familiarity in everyday life.

We also appoint specialist Life



I am lucky to get to travel a lot and meet residents in Sunrise communities on both sides of the Atlantic. I also get to work with a broad and talented staff team.

Q. What is your background?

Before joining the Sunrise team earlier this year I was Senior Director of Strategic Operations at Brookdale Senior Living, the largest provider of senior living in the United States. In fact, ever since I graduated from Cornell University I have worked in the sector in various roles.

Elderly care is what I am most passionate about and what drives me personally and professionally every day. I strongly believe that it is our duty to ensure that every individual - who has cared for us as sons, daughters or grandchildren -

and Terry Klaassen founded Sunrise in 1981 they wanted to create an environment for the elderly that was a home-from-home, rather than a sterile institution. Ever since they converted their first nursing home in Virginia into a supported living community, the company's vision has remained the same. Today Sunrise has more than 300 communities across the UK, United States and Canada and has supported over 350,000 residents in its history. It is this commitment to helping people to live full and comfortable lives that attracted me to Sunrise.

Q. How has Sunrise UK built on their founding principles?

They remain at the heart of everything we do, and we are proud



soft, warm décor. We want every resident to feel totally at home, so we invite them to bring items of their own furniture, pictures and decorations with them when they move in. We even go one step further than most companies and invite them to bring their pets.

Q. You welcome pets? That's unusual isn't it?

Yes it is, but at Sunrise we think the personal things are really important. Often as people grow older, especially if they have lost loved ones or don't live near their families, pets become close companions. In making the decision to move into a Sunrise location, we don't believe that people should have to make a decision about leaving that companion behind - so they bring

and docile, make perfect pets and most Sunrise locations often house their own rescue animals.

Q. Surely some people don't want to live with pets?

Absolutely, it is a choice that people make before they move in. It is part of our culture at Sunrise and everyone is made aware that there are lots of pets around before they join our communities.

Q. What else can they expect from Sunrise?

Most important to us is making sure that every individual who lives in our communities feels that they are supported to live their life to the full, in the way that they choose. We work really hard to get this right from day one. In fact, it has become known as the Sunrise

their likes and dislikes into daily activities through an individual service plan. Whether that means playing card games on a Friday evening, having a glass of wine with neighbours or going on an outing to an art gallery or museum, we help people to live the life that they want.

But we also support them to try out new things, whether it is taking part in a seated yoga class or joining the bridge club, we want every day to be new and exciting for residents. We understand that the small things make the biggest difference.

Q. What does Sunrise specialise in?

A personal passion of mine, and of the company's, is the specialist support that we provide to residents who are living with Alzheimer's and

Enrichment Managers (LEM) who work within the Reminiscence Areas to involve residents with memory loss, assess their individual needs and devise appropriate activities that tap into implicit and procedural memories. These might be things residents enjoyed doing in the past that still bring them a sense of order and pleasure in the present, from walking or brushing the dog, food preparation, gardening or reading to others.

Q. What are your priorities for Sunrise UK in the future?

There are many things I want to achieve and think we should always strive to better ourselves. Most importantly, I am committed to ensuring that we deliver the highest standards of care and support in every one of our communities. It is what all residents at Sunrise deserve.

