

Thursday, Aug 22, 2019

## St. John's expert guides 22-bed rehabilitation department

By: Nicole Sheldon © August 16, 2019

Ashley Daggett says the rehabilitation department at St. John's Home is the facility's voice to the community. She is one of the leaders of that effort.



Ashley Daggett

Daggett, 32, stepped up to the role of rehab administrator at St. John's Home, a St. John's community, in January 2018. She joined the nursing community staff three years earlier as neighborhood manager while she completed her master's in health administration from Wesleyan College. She earned her graduate degree in May 2015.

Initially, Daggett set out on a path to become a physical therapist. She earned a bachelor's degree in health science online through Southern Wesleyan University in 2011 while managing group homes for individuals with developmental disabilities through Lifetime Assistance Inc. She

started with the hands-on work with residents, but a colleague nudged her to look a step further.

"A nurse that I worked with in the group homes encouraged me to go listen to an educational session about health care administration," she says. "It was an upcoming field and I realized that my niche was managing, leading, coaching people, more so than being totally hands-on."

Daggett says she is grateful for her previous colleague's mentorship over the seven years she spent at Lifetime Assistance, and "for her to tell me that I have what it takes to pursue health care administration and that that really far with it is what pushed me."

Daggett's role is more administrative oriented, targeted at management and logistics, but she says her previous hands-on experience at Lifetime Care prepared her for where she is today.

"I didn't know this at the time, but my experience in the developmental disability world really gave me a lot of skills to transition to long-term care," says Daggett. "That field was extremely clinical and you don't need to be certified to be clinical in that field. So I was passing medications and doing all the hands-on stuff, all the stuff that certified nursing assistants and nurses do here in long-term care. That experience gave me a lot of great things to take with me as I transitioned into long-term care."

Alongside the director of rehab, Daggett leads the operations from the moment a new resident is admitted until the time they are discharged. She manages all of the rehabilitation services, ensures customer service is top priority, and confirms staffing and training.

"Don't fall out of your chair, but I oversee about 100 staff," reveals Daggett. On how she successfully manages such a multitude of workers, "I prioritize. It was very hard at first, but things actually run on their own because of the hard work of the team."

Of St. John's Home's 475 beds, 22 are for individuals facing rehab. Daggett acknowledges that the landscape of rehabilitation is changing as more people are choosing to stay home for as long as possible.

In turn, patients entering long-term care or rehab have acute needs, and St. John's Home's staff and equipment must be able to meet these evolving needs. Daggett has her finger on the pulse of this evolution to

Home at the forefront of Rochester's rehab and long-term care facilities.

St. John's has the largest therapy gym in Monroe County, and Daggett is overseeing improvements through renovations and updated technology to keep their services up to snuff. According to Daggett, the renovation upgrades are a response to the ever-changing needs of rehab, and that St. John's will now be in a position to provide an increased level of care for residents.

"(The changes) will allow staff to work with residents more specifically than ever before," she says.

Upgrades include renovating the occupational therapy room to transform it into a mock studio apartment to simulate the home setting for patients to rehabilitate by practicing everyday tasks. Additionally, St. John's is employing updated SMART technology in residents' in-room experience to make rehabilitation as personal, customized and comfortable as possible.

Since taking on this position, Daggett has introduced beauty and barbershop appointments for residents, "when you look good, you feel good," she vows. She also executed a transportation system so that case managers and discharge planners at hospitals do not have to sort out how to get a resident from the hospital to St. John's rehab.

Daggett has had many accomplishments in the past year-and-a-half that she has been rehab administration leader in the health care field at work and volunteering for dog rescue outside of the office is her sweet spot. She plans to continue on this career trajectory and see where it takes her.

"We've been helping promote our reputation and implementing customer service strategies that keeps us on the edge and make St. John's an even more desirable place to choose for rehab," says Daggett. "That's my biggest accomplishment because it takes a lot to keep up a community reputation."

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