

THE JOURNAL ON

ACTIVEAGING®

May/June 2015, Vol. 14 No. 3

Special developer's issue

Inside the buildings

Research highlights wellness opportunities

Artful communities

Ramping up the creativity in independent living

Trends in physical environments

Award-winning designs in three key areas

Back to nature

A trail to engage with the natural world



Designs for outdoor spaces

Resthaven Paradise Dementia Enabling Garden

The Dementia Enabling Garden at Resthaven Paradise in Adelaide, South Australia, provides a feast for the senses. Vibrant colors, fragrant plants, bubbling-urn water fountains and garden sculptures adorn a series of outdoor rooms that encourage residents with Alzheimer's disease to explore safely and independently.

The garden was specifically designed to improve the health and well-being of residents by providing opportunities for enhanced sensory stimulation, according to Tara Graham Cochrane, director of DesignWELL Landscape Architects, which designed the project. The garden also includes zones that can be used in a range of activities, including horticultural, occupational and physical therapies.

Environments for Aging honored the garden as one of nine runners-up in the 2014 Remodel/Renovation competition, which focused on amenities for residents. It was the only project from outside the United States and the only enabling landscape design chosen as one of the competition's 10 finalists by industry experts appointed by the Society for the Advancement of Gerontological Environments.

Graham Cochrane says the garden design grew from a book she created in conjunction with Alzheimer's Australia, called *Gardens That Care: Planning Outdoor Environments for People with Dementia* (available for free download at www.designwell.net.au/index.php/portfolio/researchcommunication/gardensthatcare). The book focused on key design principles that support people with Alzheimer's disease, and the Dementia Garden was built with these principles in mind.

"It doesn't matter if the [individuals] with Alzheimer's disease can't remember why they are there or where they've come from; they feel safe and enabled to independently move throughout the garden, exploring and discovering things of interest," Graham Cochrane states. "The journey is designed in such a way that from one thing of interest, they can see other areas of interest that draw them onward. The walking route in the garden always returns them back to the beginning, so they are never left disoriented."

Passive and active activities are strategically placed along the garden's

Continued on page 68



Garden plants were chosen specifically to provide sensory stimulation for Resthaven residents and to attract butterflies and native bird species



Raised planters and a fully equipped toolshed allow Resthaven residents to engage in gardening activities and horticultural therapies

loop path, and each part of the garden offers either an opportunity to physically engage with it or a place for a meaningful daily activity. A zone for gardening activities and horticultural therapy includes a fully equipped garden shed; raised garden beds with miniature fruit trees, vegetables and herbs; and a rainwater tank for daily watering activities.

Another area includes plants specifically selected to attract native birds and butterflies. Residents with and without dementia can access a very popular rose garden, which was designed to encourage them to interact and reminisce. The rose species chosen for the garden were common in the 1950s, when many residents had their own gardens, providing an effective tool to stimulate communication.

Educating the Resthaven Paradise architects and builders about the

importance of outdoor environments for people with Alzheimer's disease proved to be the biggest challenge in creating the garden, Graham Cochrane says. Research has shown that well-designed gardens can lessen the confusion and agitation often associated with dementia. And gardening activities offer many advantages for people with dementia because they can increase physical activity, improve endurance and strength, reduce stress levels and promote overall well-being.

The Dementia Enabling Garden at Resthaven Paradise has literally built on those research findings, creating a stimulating but safe location where residents can benefit from nature and gardening therapies.

Images courtesy of DesignWELL Landscape Architects

Outdoors resource

Resthaven Paradise

Facility: 61 Silkes Road, Paradise, South Australia 5075; www.resthaven.asn.au

Project design: DesignWELL Landscape Architects, www.designwell.net.au

Award: Runner-up in Environments for Aging, 2014 Remodel/Renovation Competition, www.environmentsforaging.com/news-item/environments-aging-names-remodelrenovation-competition-winners

Continued on page 70



At Resthaven Paradise, the garden offers a closed path that allows residents to wander safely, and inviting spots where they can stop and rest